MARCH 1982 NUMBER 49

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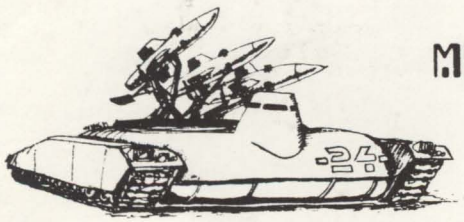

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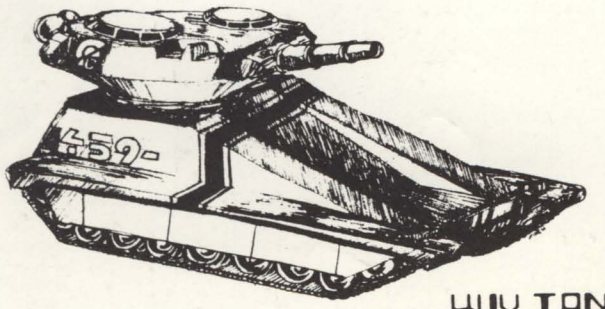

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THE SPACE GAMER

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In This Issue

We have a couple of articles this month that you've been asking for. "The Flinger and the Blob" offers a couple of interesting new character types for TFT. They may not seem like your standard adventurers . . . but give them a try! And "The EM-50" is the first of the long-awaited BIG vehicles for ***Car Wars.*** Chad Irby (with a little help from the Austin playtest crew) has taken the "urban assault vehicle" from the movie "Stripes" and turned it into a playable implement of destruction.

Traveller players will enjoy "Tools for Terrorists," a compendium of death-dealing doohickeys past, present and future. For those who are interested in the theoretical end of gaming, Greg Costikyan gives a little critique of the logic behind ***Traveller.*** (Yes, Greg – but it's still fun!)

Rounding it off, we have designer's notes on Heritage's ***Star Viking*** and the PBM game ***Beyond the Stellar Empire***; a discussion of D&D with little or no magic; featured reviews of ***Starlord*** and ***Call of Cthulhu***; and all the usual features.

–Steve Jackson

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Where We're Going

A little information about the inner workings of the game industry . . .

Did you know that there's a convention bigger than Origins, Gencon, or any tourney you're ever likely to see?

It's called the Hobby Industry of America show. Strictly speaking, it's not a game convention at all. It's for game, hobby, and craft *companies* – not consumers. Wargames, model railroads, plastic kits, basket-weaving, and more . . . all under one roof. No game tournaments, or anything of the sort; just booths, as far as the eye can see. And wandering up and down the aisles are the buyers – the people who decide what will be in the stores in 1982!

And that, my friends, is why the HIA show is bigger than Origins or any of the other *game* cons you hear about. HIA isn't for the gamers, but it can make or break a game company. The buyer for Sears (for instance) doesn't come to Origins. But he *does* come to HIA . . . and that's why so many companies schedule new releases for late January, even though there are few wargaming events going on then.

The HIA show this year ran Jan. 31 through Feb. 3; we just got back. All our new releases made it, more or less. (At HIA, it's okay to display mockups of your products if they're not quite ready. The buyers would rather see what you have to ship NOW – but a mockup is better than nothing.) We got there with actual specimens of the five new sets of Cardboard Heroes, the new plastic bases, and the "bag of bags." We had preproduction samples of the Ogre and Car Wars miniatures and the Pocket Box. We *almost* got there with the Ogre Book; as it was, we had real samples of the cover to show, but only photocopies of the inside . . . it was finished a few days late for the show, and we have it now. And we had all the components of the new ***Ogre*** and ***G.E.V.*** to show (though we won't ship until the boxes are ready.) By the way, the ***Ogre/G.E.V.*** stuff looks absolutely beautiful. It was worth the wait.

And it was a very successful show for us. We met a lot of people, took a lot of orders, and even had some fun. Our staff got to do a little partying with the people from the other companies (often difficult at a game con, where everybody is running tournaments all the time). I am pleased to report that the folks at Flying Buffalo, Fantasy Games Unlimited, T-Rex, and Gamelords are just as crazy as we are. Nice people.

Next Issue

Our April issue will include the results of our 1981 game survey;

"Periastron," a complete adventure for TRAVELLER;

Our third game article index;

A new class of shapeshifting magicians for D&D;

And an urban warfare scenario for CAR WARS.

Progress Reports

The Pocket Box mold seems to have passed its tests; pre-production samples have been acceptable. The mold is now being shipped to Austin so we can supervise production runs. Box Day still looks like sometime in late February.

Ogre and ***G.E.V.*** are only awaiting Box Day before they can be shipped. On the miniatures: The Paneuropean heavy tank, missile tank, and GEV are in limited production; the light tank, howitzer, and MHWZ are in master form; the Combine Ogre Mark V is still being resculpted.

Illuminati will go into another draft very soon; it gets better all the time. The cover is completed and has been displayed at several conventions. Look for this one in March or April, if I don't have a mysterious accident.

There are about four other fantasy and s-f games sitting around at various stages of advanced design. In the next couple of weeks we'll decide which ones get finished first. Stay tuned for details.

New Cardboard Heroes: The first set of ***Traveller*** Heroes looked even better than expected; we'll be going back to Paul Jaquays for some more. Jeff Dee (who did the V&V superheroes) is working on a couple of sets for FGU's ***Aftermath.*** We are talking with Hero Games about licensing some supervillains for their ***Champions.*** And, on the home front, Denis is working on a few more fantasy sets. The next batch of Heroes may be out by late April.

Conventions

As our operation continues to grow, we'll be able to make it to more game conventions . . . and not just the local ones, either. Right now our convention schedule includes:

FANTASY FAIR. This runs June 10-13 in Dallas (a combination s-f / fantasy / gaming con); they've been kind enough to invite me as a wargaming Guest of Honor. I'll be giving a seminar or two, and we'll have a table set up in the dealers' room.

TEXCON. August 6-8. We co-sponsor this Austin convention. This year we'll be running a ***role-playing*** scenario for ***Car Wars***; you get to escort a convoy through hostile territory.

We will also definitely be at this year's Origins, with a couple of tournaments and probabily a seminar or two. We want to hit Gencon, but that isn't yet a sure thing. I'll let you know when we know more.

–Steve Jackson

GAME MASTER

GAME MASTER exists to answer questions on your favorite games. If you have a rules question or play problem, send it in. Questions to be answered will be chosen on the basis of general interest. They will be first referred to the game publisher or designer. If no response is received, GAME MASTER will offer its own interpretation of the rule. Sorry – no individual replies are possible.

The Fantasy Trip

1. Can an illusion be created that appears to have a spell on the being, e.g., a blurred wolf?

2. What is the range for a word of command?

3. Would an illusion cease to exist if it was made unnoticeable or went into shadow?

4. What can a figure do if affected by Word of Command "stop." Is it the same as Word of Command "freeze" or the Stop spell?

5. Does a halfling with a "glamor" as a reptile man do extra damage in HTH? Playability suggests no, but the logical answer might be yes because an illusion would.

Gregory W. Davis

(No answer received from Metagaming.)

1. Only if it is an illusion double of an existing blurred creature – see ***Advanced Wizard****, p. 6.*

2. The description of a Word says it affects "each hearer." How loud can your wizard shout?

3. An illusion acts just like a real being would act if the world were exactly as its creator believes it to be (see ***Advanced Wizard****). Therefore the illusion would not vanish. Note, though, that if an unnoticeable figure attacks it will be noticed.*

4. According to the description, the word "Stop" makes hearers stop whatever they're doing. One may assume the reasonable GM would interpret this to mean only active behavior – they would not stop breathing or thinking – so it is not the same as the Stop spell or the word "Freeze." Different spells, different uses.

5. The description says "A Glamor does not give the disguised creature any of the abilities of his disguise." Therefore the halfling still has halfling HTH ability.

– Steve Jackson

1. When a character uses Aimed Shots, does the damage done also apply to the body as well? Example: a character has ST:8. He gets an aimed shot to his leg for 8 points. He loses the leg, but is he dead?

2. When a character uses Dagger Marksmanship, does the dagger do double damage to the head, causing the effects of aimed shots, if that rule is being used? What happens with a hand shot?

Your magazine is doing great. Keep up the good work. Thank you.

David Jagoda

(No response received from Metagaming.)

1. Yes – a hit is a hit. If you want to, a character takes 8 hits to the leg and dies, the blow probably severed the femoral artery – that's a very quick kill.

2. It is probably best to assume that Dagger Marksmanship is a "subset" of the aimed shots rule. Use the first if you have a dagger or sha-ken, and the second with other weapons. Alternatively, you could make an aimed shot at the head with a dagger, throwing the dagger to arrive hilt first; this would do less damage but could give a knockout if it hit. Such a throw at the hand would also cause a weapon to be dropped.

– Steve Jackson

Hyborian Risk (TSG 37)

1. If Thoth-Amon removes all the defenders from an area, must the player using him then occupy that area?

2. How are vacant areas created other than with Thoth-Amon?

3. Is the Vilayet Sea traversable? If so, is it an area?

Joe Zaepfel

I think I can handle these without the delay of a letter to Lewis Pulsipher (creator of the variant). If I miss on anything, Lew, let me know.

1. No, he does not have to – though he may if he chooses.

2. Areas can become vacant through combat.

3. No; it is not an area and may not be entered.

– Steve Jackson

Car Wars

1. How much damage is taken from greater-than-100-mph collisions?

2. How far do rolling vehicles move per side rolled onto?

3. Is it possible for a motorcycle to pull two sidecars?

4. Do 6-wheeled vehicles have two or three axles?

5. Do motorcycles need to match sidecar tires with either of the other tires?

6. Is it possible to target individual components of a motorcycle – i.e., pick off the driver as he passes by?

Joe Zaepfel

1. Just extend the table downward as far as necessary – the progression is simple.

2. The same distance (for simplicity's sake) that they would roll in that phase if on their wheels . . . but remember, a rolling vehicle will decelerate sharply every turn.

3. Go ahead, if you can manage the weight problem . . . but it will look pretty silly.

4. I'm not sure they have any axles at all! With a separate motor in each wheel, why bother? If you have to have axles, figure on one per pair of wheels.

5. My cyclist friends advise me that it's a good idea.

6. I've been known to allow it when refereeing; assess a -4 for the special target (plus all other modifications except the -2 for a cycle, which is already taken into account). If the shooter misses, he definitely also misses the cycle.

– Steve Jackson

Undead

1. In combat does Dracula alternate moves with each of the enemy players, or does he move, then they all move, then he moves, and so on?

2. May a player attack without actually moving, if he is next to the enemy he wishes to strike?

3. In the two-player game, can Dracula arbitrarily shift dummy counters?

4. If Dracula escapes and hides out in the area of attack (where, presumably, he has no coffins), can the hunters then search for him? How? Or could he change into a bat and fly to any area with coffins?

5. If the hunters escape from combat at night and Dracula pursues, to fight "one-on-one," how does this work? Can he search the area for the rest of them?

6. Does combat take much time in terms of game hours?

7. Why would Dracula ever do combat in any form other than wolf?

Paul S. Horn

1. During Dracula's turn, he (and any creatures under his control) move. During the hunters' turn, any or all of them may move.

2. Yes. No counter has to move (except Dracula, forced back by the power of the old priest). If you are adjacent to a foe you may strike.

3. Either player may shift dummy counters to his heart's content. Maximization of confusion is the objective.

4. If it is nighttime, and Dracula has at least one hour left, he can change to a bat and go anywhere. If it is daytime, the hunters cannot search for him (he is too clever to be found again, we assume). But the reason he can't be found is that he is curled up in an attic somewhere, taking no actions.

5. A one-on-one combat is set up just like it sounds: Dracula and his chosen victim fight, with no intervention and no escape, until one is dead. It is assumed that this gives enough time for the other escapees to find some safe place (a church?) in which to shelter.

6. Each combat uses up precisely one game hour.

7. The wolf form is his best for combat. If the foes are few, Dracula might not want to spend the energy to change from whatever form he first occupied. Furthermore, his appearance in wolf-form raises credulity. Usually, though, Dracula SHOULD change to wolf form.

– Steve Jackson

Featured Review: CALL of CTHULHU

That is not dead which can eternal lie,
And with strange aeons even death may die.

So reads the famous couplet from the *Necronomicon* by the mad Arab, Abdul Alhazred – the "bible" of H. P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos. As Lovecraft is generally considered the 20th-century master of dark fantasy (though his later works were more properly SF than fantasy) and the Cthulhu Mythos his greatest creation, it's only natural that fantasy gamers would eventually wish to plumb the depths of Lovecraft's haunted worlds – witch-haunted Arkham, cursed Innsmouth, the icy plateau of Leng, Kadath in the Cold Waste. Issue 7 of Flying Buffalo's *Sorceror's Apprentice* carried an article on a Lovecraft variant for *Tunnels & Trolls*. The original printing of AD&D *Deities & Demigods* included a section on the Cthulhu Mythos, translating such cosmic beings as Azathoth, Nyarlathotep and Shub-Niggurath into AD&D terms. Chaosium's *Gateway Bestiary* featured several Cthulhuoid denizens – the Deep Ones, the Mi-Go, the Spawn of Yog-Sothoth, etc., for *RuneQuest.* (I, myself, have mixed some of the more SF elements of the Mythos into a couple of my personal *Traveller* scenarios with interesting results – a couple Byakhee can play hell with a LMG nest!) Now Chaosium has gone all the way and released CALL OF CTHULHU, the official H. P. Lovecraft role-playing game, approved by Lovecraft's publisher, Arkham House itself.

Designed by Sandy Petersen, CALL OF CTHULHU shows a depth of research and of respect for the works of Lovecraft and other contributors to the Mythos that is admirable. Petersen is obviously a Mythos afficionado and the game truly a labor of love, as he states in the introduction. I can find few faults with his game conceptions of the Great Old Ones and their minions, save some questions of interpretation – an inherent hazard when dealing with a still-growing body of lore such as the Cthulhu Mythos.

That's not to say there are *no* flaws in the system; in a project so ambitious, errors, omissions, and contradictions are bound to creep in somewhere. But, overall, the game is well-conceived, playable, and – if one doesn't mind frequently having characters driven stark raving mad or torn to shreds by the claws of unspeakable horrors – quite a bit of fun.

Components

CALL OF CTHULHU consists of a copy of Chaosium's *Basic Role-Playing,* a Cthulhu Mythos rulebook, *A Sourcebook for the 1920s,* a world map showing archaeological sites and suspected Cthulhoid locations, character sheets, a sheet of character (and monster) silhouettes, and six dice (polyhedral and six-sided), boxed. The map locates actual archaeological sites, such as Stonehenge, Macchu Picchu and Moundsville, and Cthulhoid haunts, including G'harne, Leng, Irem, R'yleh and the ruined cities of the Great Race and the Old Ones, about where they should be, according to the stories. The CTHULHU rulebook features sections on character generation and skill use, the gods, creatures and races of the Mythos, guidelines for referees (called "Keepers" in COC) on how to run the game, spells and cursed tomes, sample scenarios, and several appendices providing maps of Arkham and the surrounding countryside (noting, Dunwich, Innsmouth, Kingsport, etc.). There are also guidelines on cultists and sages, rewards, libraries and a pseudo-scholarly essay on the *Necronomicon.* The '20s *Sourcebook* gives timelines for general history, Fortean events and disasters from 1890 to 1930, capsule biographies of famous personalities of the era, transportation, travel times and distances, info on crime, bribery, and general survival techniques in the '20s, additional weapons for BRP and COC, including Tommy guns, grenades, whips (*a la* Indiana Jones) and artillery, general trivia and miscellanea of the times, ordinary (i.e., non-Cthulhoid) beasties and monsters for players to whet their appetites on, and even an alternate system for

by William A. Barton

generating characters, adding doctors, anarchists, farmers, soldiers and others to the standard COC character professions. This latter aspect leads one to believe the *Sourcebook* was originally designed to stand without the COC system. However, certain omissions (skill definitions, small arms) make it incapable of this.

In fact, in some ways, the '20s *Sourcebook* is superfluous. Campaigns need not be based in the '20s at all. There are plenty of newer Mythos stories situated in the present that may be drawn from. However, if the Keeper chooses to situate his campaign in the years from 1920-30, the *Sourcebook* will give him enough general background to do so, though for any in-depth research (especially on areas other than the U.S.), other sources will have to be consulted.

Character Generation

Character generation in CALL OF CTHULHU is derived from *Basic Role-Playing,* which itself is a simplification of the *RuneQuest* system. Since these have been covered at length in TSG and elsewhere, little need be said concerning their basic characteristics, other than to note that CTHULHU characters are generated via 3d6 rolls determining strength, constitution, size, intelligence, power, dexterity, and charisma, with multipliers of these providing percentile values for dodging, luck, etc. (only the charisma-based persuasion value being omitted, replaced by communication skills in COC). To these character values, COC adds one for education (a 3d6+3 roll – Lovecraft's heroes were generally above average in education) and a score for sanity – a per-

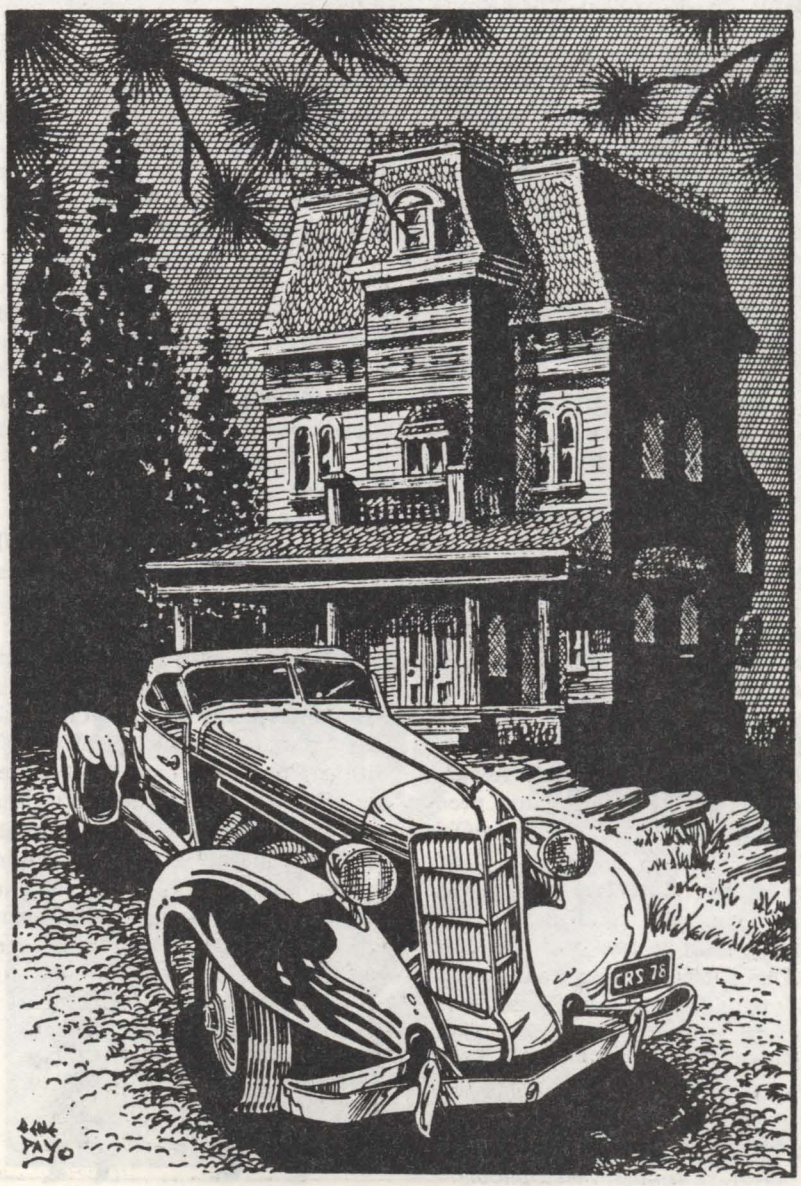
centile value derived from Power x 5, same as luck – to judge mental stamina in the face of Cthulhoid horrors.

Multiplying a character's education score times 10 gives the number of knowledge points that may be applied to increase the basic percentage chances of success in certain skills in various professions. (Characters also receive their IQ x 5 in bonus points that may be applied to *any* skill regardless of profession – including weapon skills – and an automatic Read/Write English score of Ed x 5.) COC characters (called "Investigators" in the game) may become private eyes, journalists, dilettantes, parapsychologists, professors, authors, historian/antiquarians (or other types, left up to the Keeper to determine), each with certain specialized skills to which knowledge points may be applied to increase (or gain) expertise. There is also a list of "universal" skills listed on the occupational skills table – Read/Write English, Drive Automobile, Climb, Jump, etc. – to which, presumably, knowledge points may be applied, although such is never mentioned in the text – one of the few serious omissions in this section. When choosing professions and skills, keep in mind that a party should consists of as many different types of Investigators with as varied a pool of skills as possible when delving into the Mythos.

COC skills, in a manner similar to *RuneQuest,* are divided into categories: knowledge skills, perception skills, manipulation skills, stealth skills, communication skills, agility skills, and attack and parry skills (the latter two of less importance in COC than other FRPGs). Some of the skills – especially those of specialized knowledge such as archaeology, chemistry, botany, linguistics, foreign languages, and so on – have base chances of 0%, requiring the expenditure of knowledge points to obtain *any* expertise. Others – first aid, hide, climb, fist, drive auto, library use, etc. – have base chances of from 5% to 55%, allowing any character to have some possibility of success in using them even if no knowledge points are spent to increase them. There is a discrepancy in the book, however, on some of these base chances. The values listed on the skills table differ in some skills from those listed on the character sheet and in BRP. The text fails to shed light on this problem (and, in fact, in several other places, values in the text contradict those in several of the tables – an indication that a final proofing to correlate such matters was insufficient or overlooked entirely). Since the percentages listed on the character sheets correspond with those on the skills that are covered in BRP, however, I'd suggest going with those, at least until something official is heard from Chaosium. It does increase the odds slightly in favor of the Investigators – and in COC, they'll eventually need every break they can get.

"Sanity" is a characteristic peculiar to CALL OF CTHULHU. It rates its own section of the rulebook. Its place in the game is, simply put, that the gods and creatures of the Cthulhu Mythos are often so terrifying that to behold their visages – sometimes even the traces of their passing – may drive the hapless onlooker quite insane, or at least a little less sane than before he began his investigations. A "threshold" of sanity must exist for Investigators to roll against to avoid sanity loss – or, as in the case of viewing such horrors as Azathoth or Cthulhu himself, to lose only 1d10 rather than 1d100 points of sanity. (Even a successful sanity roll upon viewing some of the Great Old Ones or Outer Gods will result in the loss of at least 1 sanity point.) The reading of the moldy old tomes of forbidden lore, such as the *Necronomicon* or Von Juntz's *Unaussprechlichen Kulten,* will also result in some sanity loss, as much as 2d10 for *Al Azif,* the original Arabic version of the *Necronomicon.* Knowledge doesn't come cheap in COC. In fact, the only methods by which an investigator may gain knowledge of the Cthulhu Mythos at all – unless he takes time out to go learn at the foot of a sage – are via sanity-losing activities: perusing the unclean books or gaining insight by actually going insane. An Investigator's SAN may never be higher than 99 minus his knowledge score in the Cthulhu Mythos.

Those who blanch at the thought of their precious characters reduced to babbling incoherency may wish to stick to a "safer" game. True aficionados of the Mythos understand that Lovecraft's heroes often as not wound up in the local mad house (and will revel when their In-



vestigators skillfully manage to avoid a similar fate in the game). Likewise, in COC, Investigators who receive too much of a mental shock at once ("Look, Hastur just ate your uncle!") may go temporarily – or even "permanently" – insane. Temporary insanity may last for several rounds, hours, or days. "Permanent" insanity lasts until the Investigator is cured in an insane asylum, which will take at least several months of game time. And there's an even worse fate than "permanent" insanity: When an Investigator's SAN score drops to 0 he is hopelessly, incurably insane. The character then becomes the property of the Keeper and may turn up later as a mad cultist, zombie, or other degenerate NPC.

But wait! Potential CTHULHU players need not turn away in despair at the thought of their characters slowly doomed to such a fate through constant SAN loss. Investigators may regain – and even increase – their initial SAN scores by psychoanalysis, raising a skill level to 90%, or by defeating Cthulhoid monsters (the criteria for accomplishing the latter up to the Keeper). Thus, unless a Keeper is particularly sadistic, Investigators need not end their careers as thralls of the Old Ones.

One last note on sanity: This section of the rules contains one of the best and one of the most useless tables in the game. The table showing the various forms insanity takes is nothing less than delightful. As it shows, insanity need not result in institutionalization. The bulk of the table concerns various phobias insanity may bring on, from agoraphobia to xenophobia – all entertainingly described for the player. (Example: *Teratophobia* – Fear of monsters. Monsters are everywhere. The end is near. Monsters are tricky. Are you sure your friend isn't a monster?) In the hands of a competent role-player, one or more of these could certainly enliven a game and be a lot of fun to play. On the other hand, the full-page table listing a number of cities by population to give the chance of locating an insane asylum in one of them seems a waste of space. With a lot of other areas left to the Keeper to determine, it seems this could have been as well.

After characteristic scores have been determined, professions and skills picked, the annual incomes and savings of Investigators may be calculated from formulas in the Keeper's section. Investigators may equip themselves from the weapons lists in the rulebook and the equipment lists in the *Sourcebook,* and are then ready to enter the haunted worlds of the Cthulhu Mythos. (A section in the '20s *Sourcebook* will help further flesh out the characters' backgrounds, but this is optional.)

The Mythos

The real meat of CALL OF CTHULHU is, of course, the section on the gods and beings of the Mythos itself – dread Cthulhu, Yog-Sothoth, the All in One, Azathoth, the Nuclear Chaos that bubbles and blasphemes at the center of infinity, Nyarlathotep, the Crawling Chaos, Shub-Niggurath, the Black Goat of the Woods with a Thousand Young, Hastur the Unspeakable, Him Who is Not to be Named, and all the other cosmic terrors that gibbered and meeped and crawled from the fertile imagination of Lovecraft and his followers. All of the major gods, creatures and races of Lovecraft's invention are included here, as are many of other Mythos contributors, notably August Derleth, Clark Ashton Smith, Robert Bloch, Frank Belknap Long, Robert Howard, Ramsey Campbell, and Brian Lumley, along with some of the more obscure beings and races (Sand Dwellers, Dimension Shamblers, etc.). There are some omissions: Long's proboscidian Chaugnar Faugn, Smith's Ubbo-Sathla and Atlach Natcha – though Lovecraft himself incorporated them into the Mythos – and a few minor deities of Lovecraft's such as Rhan-Tegoth (*Out of the Eons*). And, oddly, the Spawn of Yog-Sothoth (Wilbur Whateley and "twin") are missing, though Petersen included them in the *Gateway Bestiary* Lovecraft section. Petersen does state in the introduction that he is only using those elements of the Mythos that he prefers, and discards those that don't appeal to him (though this doesn't explain the Spawn's exclusion). Thus he dismisses the idea of a war between the Great Old Ones and the Elder Gods as non-Lovecraftian (it was, in fact, a Derleth invention) and similarly chooses to ignore – rightly, I believe – Derleth's tying of the various Old Ones to the elements of water, fire, earth and air. Petersen also, thankfully, ignores Lumley's abstractions of Azathoth as the Big Bang, Nyarlathotep as telepathy, etc. Yet he uses Lumley's Shudde M'ell, the Burrower Beneath, and Derleth's Ithaqua the Windwalker and fiery Cthugha and Hastur – who was invented by Ambrose Bierce, mentioned a few times by Lovecraft and fleshed out by Derleth. Petersen also employs some creations – Ghouls, Dholes – that more properly belong with Lovecraft's Dunsanian Dreamlands cycle than the Mythos, but then Lovecraft himself often mixed the elements, so that's a matter of interpretation.

Petersen divides the Mythos beings into Outer Gods (including, having dismissed the Elder Gods as benign entities, Nodens, Lord of the Great Abyss), Great Old Ones, and Greater and Lesser Independent and Servitor Races. Individual entries are set up in basically the same format as *RuneQuest* and *Bestiary* creatures, with characteristic values (or averages, for races), attack percentages and methods, armor, any spells known, and SAN loss the being causes. Descriptive passages, some with excerpts from Mythos stories, further aid the Keeper in playing the gods and beasties. Some of the descriptions are sparse – and even some of the names of the creatures appear to have been coined – but this was really unavoidable as many of the stories were vague in this respect, too. Illustrations – even artists' interpretations – would have

helped a lot here; except for Cthulhu, none of the Old Ones, etc., is pictured. Of course, one can turn to the *Bestiary* for pictures of the Deep Ones, Nightgaunts or Shoggoths and to the AD&D *Deities* for Mi-Gos, the Great Race and others, but something here, other than the silhouettes on the cardstock figure sheet, would have been nice.

Generally, Petersen's translations of the Cthulhoid gods and minions is well-done and quite faithful to the stories. I note some problems. Shub-Niggurath and Ithaqua both are described as being driven off when losing more points of constitution than is listed for them. Ithaqua, whose form is vaguely humanoid, causes more sanity loss when viewed than Hastur, who is often described as half-brother to Cthulhu and quite hideous in form. Nyarlathotep's form of the black man of the witch cults is not noted. The amount of damage that causes Cthulhu to dissolve into a mist before reforming is not quite clear. Countering these lapses, though, are many more satisfying factors. The description of Shub-Niggarath is the most faithful to the Mythos stories I've seen, the one in the AD&D *Deities* book fitting Ubbo-Sathla more than it does the Black Goat.

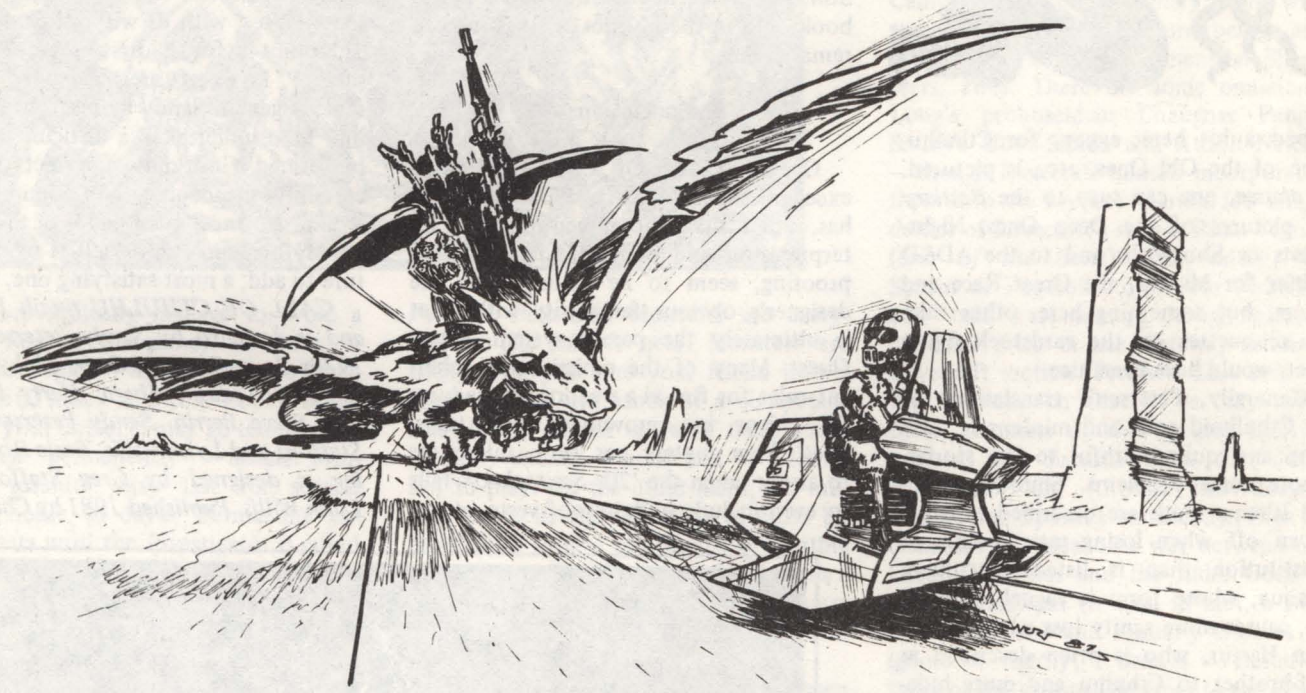
The section on the magic of the Mythos is restricted mainly to spells to summon, bind, call or contact the various Cthulhoid denizens, plus some special spells such as Brew Space-Mead (from Derleth's Dr. Shrewsbury tales), the Powder of Ibn-Ghazi and creating the Elder Sign (not, Petersen says, a five-pointed star, doing away with the starstones of Mnar). Four magical items, including the Shining Trapezohedron, are also listed. These are, for the most part, adequate for the Mythos, and Keepers in need of others can borrow from other game sources or invent their own. I would have, however, expected an "enchant weapons" spell, since some creatures, such as the Hounds of Tindalos, can only be hurt by magicked weapons (the Scimitar of Barzai spell, from George Hay's *Necronomicon* study, would serve nicely). The books of forbidden lore are listed – exhaustively – in this section as well, though there are a couple of omissions or errors here, too: *The King in Yellow*, a Mythos adoption, is one that's missing; and *Thaumaturgical Prodigies in the New-English Canaan* by the Rev. Ward Phillips is mislisted as *Prodigies in the New-England Canaan* by "a minister." Still, Petersen's depth of research in the books and in the Mythos itself is next to remarkable.

Conclusions

Overall, CALL OF CTHULHU is an excellent piece of work. What failings it has, other than those mentioned of interpretation and perhaps a lack of final proofing, seem to lie mainly with the designer's obvious familiarity with what is ultimately the parent system, *RuneQuest*. Many of the omissions – coherent rules for fire as a weapon, procedures for poison use, movement rates translated from meters per turn, references to armor when the '20s *Sourcebook* fails to even include bullet-proof vests, etc. – are items covered in *RuneQuest* but overlooked in the BRP simplification upon which CTHULHU is based and consequently, not covered in COC. A good referee, however, can easily make up for these lapses, with or without *RuneQuest*. The point is, for the first time, the worlds of H. P. Lovecraft are truly open for the fantasy gamer. Sandy Petersen and Chaosium have undertaken a difficult task and performed if not quite a perfect job, than certainly an adequate and admirable one – and, for most aficionados of the Cthulhu Mythos such as myself, I would venture to add, a most satisfying one.

CALL OF CTHULHU retails for $20 and is designed by Sandy Petersen. The 1920s Sourcebook is designed by Yurek Chodak, Tadashi Ehara, Harry Henderson, Steve Perrin, Sandy Petersen, Greg Stafford and Lynn Willis. Basic Role Playing is designed by Greg Stafford and Lynn Willis. Published 1981 by Chaosium.

TRAVELLER as Science Fantasy



by Greg Costikyan

As every TRAVELLER player knows, a ship has to carry *tons* of hydrogen to fuel its interstellar drive. Ships do not also carry tons of oxygen or some other oxidant, so it is clear that the energy needed to run the hyperdrive does not come from burning hydrogen. Presumably, it comes from fusion.

The fusion reaction that occurs in hydrogen bombs is the deuterium reaction. Deuterium is a rare isotope of hydrogen which has one proton and one neutron (regular hydrogen has only a single proton). Regular hydrogen can fuse also; this reaction is called the proton-proton reaction, and is responsible for most of the energy given off by the sun. However, the proton-proton reaction is much harder to initiate than the deuterium reaction. In the sun, a typical proton will last for hundreds of years before fusing with another – while deuterium will fuse in a matter of seconds. That's an indication of the degree of difficulty experienced in trying to get protons to fuse.

If a TRAVELLER power plant runs solely off deuterium, there is little need to carry around huge tanks of gas. Instead, one could simply separate the deuterium out of raw hydrogen, and carry it in a much smaller tank.

One question is whether TRAVELLER power plants use the deuterium reaction or the proton-proton reaction. If the deuterium reaction is used, raw hydrogen scooped from a gas giant or from an ocean can be refined, separating out the deuterium from the rest of the hydrogen. It is true that the TRAVELLER rules talk about refining fuel – but this clearly does *not* mean separation of the deuterium, since unrefined fuel can be used, and masses the same as refined fuel. About 1 out of every 7,000 hydrogen atoms is a deuterium atom; that means that refining hydrogen for the deuterium would reduce the mass of the fuel by 7,000 times. But in TRAVELLER, unrefined fuel masses the same as refined fuel, the only difference being the increased chance of a drive malfunction when using unrefined fuel. Clearly, when Marc Miller talks of refining he does not mean separation of deuterium. Further, if TRAVELLER power plants operated off deuterium it would presumably be highly efficient to separate out the deuterium rather than carrying such huge quantities of hydrogen; thus, we can presume that power plants in TRAVELLER operate off the proton-proton reaction.

Adding Up Protons

If this is the case, we can calculate how much energy a typical TRAVELLER power plant can produce.

Hydrogen weighs 1.008 grams per mole, a mole being 6.02×10^{23} atoms. So in a ton of hydrogen there are 5.97×10^{29} atoms (assuming Miller is using metric tons, 1 ton = 1000 kg). With an A power plant, 20 tons of fuel are needed for one jump, and a jump takes a week to perform. In one jump, 1.19×10^{31} atoms are consumed.

In proton-proton fusion, four protons fuse to produce a helium atom, some stray neutrinos, gamma rays, and positrons, plus about 25 mev (million electron volts) of energy. Thus, in one jump, an A plant produces 7.46×10^{31} mev. *Million electron volts* is a cumbersome unit of energy; Americans are more familiar with the kilowatt-hour. That comes to 3.32×10^{12} kwh.

That's still pretty cumbersome. A better unit might be megawatt-years; a large nuclear power plant can produce about 1,000 megawatts, enough to supply power to a city the size of Portland, Oregon; so a large nuclear power plant produces 1,000 megawatt-years of energy in a year. The entire installed electrical generating capacity of the US is about 230,000 megawatts.

3.32×10^{12} kwh equals 379,000 mw-years.

In other words, in one week, an A power plant produces about one and a

half times as much energy as all the electrical plants in the United States in a year.

Energy Cost

If we assume that all power is generated by A plants (and presumably there are cheaper ways to do it), we can estimate how much energy such a plant can produce in a year, and also how much owning and operating the plant costs.

An A plant costs 8 MCR; if we amortize the cost over 10 years, that's 800,000 CR per year. The TRAVELLER rules indicated that a ship had to be maintained after each jump, at a cost of 0.1% of its purchase price. Let us assume that the same applies to power plants, and that they must be maintained continuously at a cost of 10.4% per year – i.e., the maintenance cost is paid twice every week for 52 weeks. That's 832,000 CR. Finally, one engineer is needed to run the plant. (No other employee is required, since an engineer is all that's needed on a ship, presumably he's all that's needed on the ground.) According to Book 2, an engineer makes 4,000 CR per month, or 48,000 CR per year. So the total cost of operating the plant is 1.68 MCR per year.

An A plant produces 379,000 mw-years per week, so it produces about 19,700,000 mw-years per year. A single A plant could fulfill the electricity needs of 86 United States. The cost is 11.7 mw-years per credit, or a little more than 100 million kwh per credit. That compares to 5 cents per kwh, on average, in the United States at the moment.

Heat

No power plant is 100% efficient. A lot of the energy produced by a power plant turns into waste heat. Let's be generous and assume that only 1% of the energy produced by an A plant winds up as waste heat (this is a generous assumption, because few processes are even 70% efficient). An A plant will produce 1.98 x 10^{11} joules of waste heat per second, or 4.73 x 10^{10} calories per second.

Let's assume that the plant is installed in a 200-ton free trader, which we will treat as a 200-ton chunk of iron. The specific heat of iron is .106, which means that .106 calories are needed to raise the temperature of one gram of iron by one degree Kelvin. The melting temperature of iron is about 1500 degrees K, so starting from absolute zero, we need 3.18 x 10^{10} calories to melt the ship.

So about .6 seconds after we turn on the jump drive, the waste heat generated by the power plant will turn the ship into a lump of molten metal. No one ever said interstellar travel was safe.

Planet Moving

An interesting question to address is: can the Imperium move planets?

The Earth moves in its orbit around the sun at a rate of 29.8 km/sec, and masses 5.98 x 10^{24} kg. The total kinetic energy of the earth is then 2.66 x 10^{33} joules – that is, that is how much energy would be needed to stop the earth in its tracks.

Energy costs 3.6 x 10^{11} joule per credit, so stopping the earth would cost 7.4 x 10^{21} credits.

Let's assume that the average Imperial citizen makes 10,000 credits a year (which seems likely given the wages listed in Book 2). Let's assume the population of the Imperium is 100 trillion (25,000 Earths). Further, let's assume that citizens pay 10% of their income in taxes. The Imperium takes in 1 x 10^{17} credits per year. If the Imperium devotes its entire yearly budget to stopping the Earth, it will take 74,000 years to do so.

So, alas, the Empire isn't in the business of shuffling planets, nor is it likely to build Dyson spheres.

Standard of Living

What effect will the cheap cost of energy have on the standard of living? Historically, there has been a very high degree of correlation between energy use and standard of living. Both per capita energy use and per capita income (adjusted for inflation) in the US have historically grown by 3% per annum over the past 150 years, on average. A plot of per-capita energy use against per-capita income from the various nations of Terra today shows an almost linear relationship. There's some scatter, of course, but it's clear that there is practically a one-to-one correlation.

The average American makes, let's say, around $10,000. At 5 cents per kilowatt-hour, if he spent all of his income on electricity, he could buy 200,000 kilowatt-hours.

From internal evidence in TRAVELLER, it seems like the average character makes about 10,000 CR per year. At 100 million kw-hours per credit, he can buy 1 trillion kw-hours, or about 5 million times as much as the modern American.

If we buy the assumption that there is a direct correlation between energy usage and standard of living, and between the cost of energy and usage, then it seems likely that the average Imperial citizen has a standard of living 5 million times greater than the average American. What the hell this means is hard to figure; a standard of living twice as good as my present one I can easily imagine, but 5 million times is more difficult. What sort of apartment can I rent for $5 billion a month? Still, I wouldn't refuse an income of $100 billion a year. It's clear, though, that the costs of equipment in TRAVELLER do not reflect this incredibly higher standard of living. A shotgun costs 160 CR, 1.6% of the average yearly income. I could surely buy a shotgun for less than $160, so the Imperial is no better off than I am. A shotgun is a manufactured good, and advances in technology, mechanization, and so forth, plus the fact that resources would be cheaper because the energy needed to extract them would be cheaper, would mean that shotguns should be much cheaper relative to income.

Consequently, we must assume that Miller was not aware of the implications of his energy system when determining the costs of equipment. If 1CR = 1$ (which looks pretty close to most of the TRAVELLER costs), then either people should have incomes much higher than the average American income, or the costs of equipment should be much lower.

Conclusion

A consideration of the energy produced by TRAVELLER power plants, the cost of such energy, and the implications for standards of living, show that there are a number of contradictions in the way TRAVELLER is organized. The massive amounts of waste heat produced by ships means that they must have intricate and complicated and bulky mechanisms for getting rid of waste heat – which implies that a 200 ton ship probably has several hundred square kilometers of radiating surface, something which isn't evident in the design of TRAVELLER ships. The low cost of energy has implications for the standard of living which are not reflected in the schedule of costs and wages.

In short, though TRAVELLER is the SFRPG which most projects the atmosphere of a hard-science fiction universe, it is science *fantasy*. However, I imagine no one (least of all me) will let that hinder his enjoyment of the game.

Greg Costikyan is a student of (among other things) libertarian political/economic theory, planetology, and game design. In the latter field, his published titles include ***The Creature that Ate Sheboygan, DeathMaze,*** *and* ***The Return of the Stainless Steel Rat.*** *He is also a notorious player of* ***Diplomacy.***

The Flinger and the BLOB

by Phil Rennert

Recently I played *Death Test 2,* trying an experiment with new types of characters. It worked out (a party of 4 32-point figures came through without a loss, even with rooms picked at random to make it fair), so I thought I'd report the results. These character types are made up with a *Death-Test*-type adventure in mind, but can be of use in any TFT adventure.

The Flinger

With the advent of TFT, all of us old *Melee* players watched our favorite weapon, the light crossbow, become obsolete. It's been replaced by the boomerang, which is easier to use and does as much damage. Coupling this with the insidious stopping power of the bola and the awesome hit potential of a barrage of sha-ken produces a powerful character: the Flinger. Statistics for a beginning Flinger are given below:

ST	9	Talents: Thrown Weapons
DX	15	Boomerang
IQ	8	Bola
		Sha-ken
		Shield
		another 2-pt. talent (Running?)

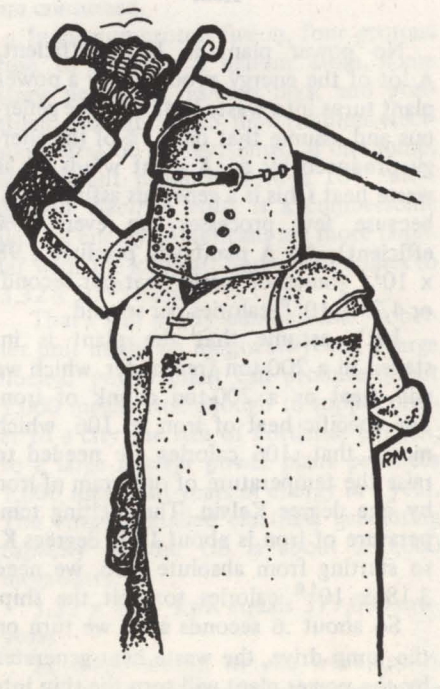
He carries as many boomerangs, bolas, and pouches of sha-ken as you can talk the DM into. He also carries a small shield.

Let's see how he fights. His high DX will probably let him get off the first action. With his Thrown Weapons talent, he can throw a weapon on the turn he readies it, so he can chug out one throw per turn. First (range permitting) he tangles a foe's arms with a bola, reducing him to helplessness for at least two turns. With the Thrown Weapons bonus, his DX to bola an adjacent foe is 16, minus one per additional hex, so the odds are in his favor out to 6 hexes away. Then he polishes off said foe with a volley of boomerangs. His DX with a boomerang is 15 (the Thrown Weapons bonus cancelled by the fact that he's two points understrength). Remember that boomerangs are treated as missile weapons when calculating DX penalties for range. His boomerangs do 2-1 damage when they hit (-1 for understrength penalty), which is as good as a shortsword. If an unarmored foe comes adjacent, the Flinger can emulate a machine gun, throwing 9 sha-ken at DX 10, or 12 sha-ken at DX 8. Each does 1-2 damage when it hits; altogether, there's about an even chance of scoring the 8 hits needed to knock the attacker down. If a very heavily armored foe is adjacent, the Flinger can try to throw a single sha-ken through his faceguard (dagger marksmanship rules) at DX 10: it does (1-2) doubled if it hits, and the victim's armor and shield don't help. Finally, since the rules don't require the use of more than one hand for all of the above, the Flinger can carry a small shield in his other hand, stopping 1 hit/attack.

Not bad for a beginning character! As he gains experience, most of it will go into DX: he can then increase his range and effectiveness (particularly the effectiveness of his 12 sha-ken barrage), or alternatively, start wearing armor, keeping his adjusted DX the same and gaining protection. All in all, he's not someone you'd want for an enemy.

Another word along these lines: in an adventure like *Death Test,* there's much to be said for making mini-Flingers out of wizards. In such an adventure, where wizards' strengths must be carefully husbanded (which I feel makes such adventures more challenging and interesting than the routine of "throw a 7-die fireball, stop and rest up, throw another, etc." encountered in some TFT adventures), wizards spend much of their time standing in back doing nothing. It only costs 6 IQ points to buy Thrown Weapons and Boomerang, which skills allow the wizard to become a useful part of the barrage, and he still has enough IQ left for Illusion, Fireball, Sleep, and a few others (these spells seem to be a wizard's mainstays; others, like Control Animal, Reverse Missiles, etc. are occasionally very useful, but if there's more than one wizard in the party, they can be split among the available wizards, so that someone will have the spell if you need it, and still all the wizards can throw boomerangs).

This all sounds good, you may say, but who's going to hold off the mobs of sword-armed orcs while the Flingers are flinging? And another perennial problem



in making up parties, who's going to bring useful talents like Physicker, Tactics, etc., and how can he be kept from getting killed? The answer lies in another new character type . . .

The Blob

The basic idea behind the Blob is to keep the enemy engaged while the Flingers take care of him, and also provide a safe repository for the party's vital talents. Remember how nice it was to have a heavily armored upper-level character? Now you can have the same benefit (sort of) from a beginning character. Statistics for a 32-point Blob are given below:

ST	13	Talents: Physicker
DX	8	Tactics
IQ	11	Charisma
		Alertness
		New Followers
		Naturalist

(Alternative talents might be Detect Traps, Diplomacy, Monster Followers, Animal Handler, Literacy, languages, or Detection of Lies.)

He wears plate armor and carries a tower shield and a bastard sword; he stops 8 hits/attack, and his movement allowance is 6. (If you're using non-human figures, you can make him a dwarf: then his DX can be 6, freeing 2 more points for IQ or ST; also, he can carry twice the weight.)

You may have noticed that his adjusted DX won't be very high. Let's tote up the damage. He wears plate armor (-6), carries a tower shield (-2) which he doesn't have the talent for (-4), swings a sword he doesn't have the talent for (-4), and carries 3 to 4 times his strength in weight (-1). His adjusted DX to hit with his sword is -9! The point of this is that there's no difference in the rules between DX 5 and DX -9: he still hits on 3 (triple damage), 4 (double damage), or 5. And even if you have a reasonable GM who says "I don't care: This guy only hits on 3," the Blob isn't out there to hit anyone; he's there to keep the enemy busy while the Flingers kill him. Standing a hex or two in front of the rest of the party, he has the power to keep foes engaged, keeping them off the necks of the Flingers and wizards, meanwhile taking little or no damage from their attacks, due to his heavy armor. And as party leader, he can help you avoid trouble by spotting traps and making friends out of potential attackers, as well as providing healing for all after the fights.

A Blob also presents an interesting role-playing challenge. A possible biography:

Although Hugo was a strong youth, his lack of dexterity kept him from taking up the career of wizard or warrior. Instead, he turned to learning, amassing a diverse collection of skills and knowledge. Well liked by all who knew him, he stood out as a natural leader, and his advice was frequently sought. When the call to adventure sounded, he generally preferred to remain at home, functioning as an adviser for the collection of friends and followers who had gathered around him. Now, however, he has been drawn out of his armchair (by some great quest?) to walk the glory road at last, though not without taking the wise precaution of obtaining the strongest armor available. Now at the head of a picked group, he is about to come face to face with . . .

Sound interesting?

A word of caution about playing a Blob, though: he doesn't gain experience rapidly. He can easily go through a whole adventure without landing a blow. This may relegate him to being one of the two or more characters being played by the same player. All that no-joy die-rolling can get frustrating.

I hope you enjoy trying out these character types. They can add a lot to a party, or, on the other side, they can be a nasty surprise. I would be interested in hearing your comments.

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Featured Review:

STARLORD

by W. G. Armintrout

STARLORD is a play-by-mail computer-moderated game about a galactic empire on the decline. In a 1000-star galaxy, 50 players take the part of "starlords" trying to become emperor by conquering the Throne Star. The game is of the endless variety, continuing until someone gets an unshakeable stranglehold on the Throne Star. Players may keep playing as long as they own a Command Ship. Players that drop out are replaced by new players.

So far, STARLORD sounds like 90% of the PBM games around today. What makes the difference is that STARLORD was designed by somebody who took a good look at the possibilities and limitations of computer-moderated play-by-mail games and then came up with a design that makes the most of the situation. As far as I'm concerned, "state of the art" in this field means STARLORD.

What makes STARLORD so different?

The Galaxy: If you are tired of looking at number-heavy computer-coded print-outs – GG76 (GORX) = 76,88,932,*** and such dribble – then you will be pleased with this game. Instead of a computer listing, players are treated to an honest-to-goodness computer-generated map of the galaxy! Stars are printed as "o"s, with their names printed next to them. If you have a complete read-out on the star, you will also be told its class, owner, number of ships present, and whether or not a command ship is present.

Command Ships: Normally there would be one overwhelming problem with printing out actual star maps – that is, once a player conquered a big swath of the galaxy, his print-out would be enormous. The designer, Mike Singleton, did not let that deter him. Rather, he designed around it. Enter command ships.

Command ships are the heart of STARLORD. Each player has one such ship. It represents the player himself, the starlord, and is the hub of activity. The command ship takes in star data, fuels and commands lesser "starships," handles star movement, and generally covers everything in range. Range is 7 "astrals." This means:

1. You only get a print-out of stars within 7 astrals of your command ship.
2. Your starships cannot move or receive combat orders unless they are within 7 astrals of your command ship.
3. Starships cannot move more than 7 astrals away from a command ship.

Command ships have a few other special abilities – hyper space movement, which allows them to move to any friendly world at any distance; it provides combat bonus to friendly starships; and starships cannot move unless the command ship is refueled (which must be done every 5 turns).

Turn Sheets: With most games you have to learn a lot of computer gibberish before you know how to fill out the turn sheet. Not so with STARLORD. At the bottom of the print-out is a customized turn sheet listing every star within 7 astrals of the command ship. After each star is a space: if you want ships to be there at the end of the turn, fill in the number of ships and their combat tactic. Separate spaces are provided for command ship instructions. Behind the "JENKIL" listing on a turn sheet, for example, a player might write "7 ADVANCE." That means 7 starships will be at Jenkil at the end of the turn, using the Advance tactic.

Combat. Most games on the galactic strategic level have rather anemic combat systems, something on the order of you-hit-him-you-kill-him. Once again, Singleton demonstrates his flair for game design. In STARLORD, ships fight enemy ships whenever they run into them. Therefore, ships are always given a combat tactic even when combat isn't expected. Tactics chosen depend on whether the ships are going to a friendly or enemy world – Probe, Raid, Advance, and Attack (offensive tactics), and Retreat, Ambush, Defend, and Stand. Tactics do two things at once. They indicate how many ships you are willing to lose (a Raid is good for 20% losses before retreating). Tactics are also checked against enemy tactics, and may provide benefits or penalties in combat strength.

The game has several interesting combat twists. First, the combat system is not explained down to the last decimal point. You won't know how wonderful an Attack tactic is against an Ambush until you try it out; the rulebook just lets you know it is a "+++" bonus. Second, ships which have taken their quota of losses as shown by their choice of tactic must retreat to the command ship's star. If that is no longer owned by the player at the end of the turn, the ships are *captured* by the new owner. Capturing ships becomes especially important since starships which are beyond the 7 astral range of the command ship may not retreat, and surrender as soon as they've taken 50% casualties. Lastly, if your command ship is forced to retreat and has nowhere to go, it is lost and you are out of the game!

Those are the essential points that set STARLORD apart from every other PBM

game on the market today.

As for actually playing the game, I am happy to report that the game plays as great as it sounds. Players start out at a base star (which builds starships, provides data on stars in range, and provides a combat bonus) with one command ship and a handful of starships. Usually the first priority is to conquer the local supply stars from "Empyr" (non-player) garrison ships. But once that is done, and the local stars have become the property of the player, he has a dilemma. To pick up new stars, he will have to send his command ship and some starships out further than 7 astrals from his base star. Yet if he does this, he'll be out of range and lose all communication with home – he won't even know if someone is attacking his base star while he is away! That sets a good deal of this game's flavor. ("Should I stay away one more turn and pick up that juicy city star, or is it time to run home and check the situation?")

Those who love complexity may find fault with STARLORD. There are no orgies of detail concerning raw material transportation – that's handled automatically by the computer. Stars are not broken down into detailed statistics of spectra or mass or number of planets – just one of 14 types. Other than command ships, everything else is a generic "starship." However, I can live without all the bothersome details. The beauty of this game is that it gets right down to a good combat game.

I don't know of any faults with STARLORD. Indeed, I only have one quibble. To map the galaxy, you need to assemble the maps from each print-out to form one great big map of what you've already located. In putting together this map, it is just as important to know that an area is clear of stars as it is to know that stars are located there. Unfortunately, the print-out abbreviates the top and bottom of the star map if those areas are empty of stars. This is just a minor nuisance, but I'd be pleased if the print-out could be adjusted to always give a complete round and outlined star map.

There is one oddity about STARLORD. It isn't being run by a company. It is being run by Mike Singleton in person. However, this hasn't made any practical difference as far as I'm concerned. The game is being run professionally, on time. Unlike some other games on the market, STARLORD is not overloaded with last-minute rules changes.

There are currently 5 games running, one international game and 4 United Kingdom games. The international game has a turn-around of 4 weeks and the UK games have a turn-around of 2 weeks. If players send checks in their own currency, the standard charge for the initial two turns and rulebook are U.S. $3.75, Canada $4.50, and Australia $3.50. The charge per turn is 1 pound 25 pence (about $2.30 U.S.). After the first two turns, players are expected to pay at least 5 pounds to cover the next 4 turns. Checks may be drawn on any bank in any currency in any country. However, there is a charge of 75 pence per check for checks drawn on non-UK banks (therefore, U.S. players will find it cheaper to pay in large lump sums than small amounts). Checks should be payable to M.B. Singleton – *not* STARLORD.

(Oh yes – players who become emperor play for free for as long as they can hold the Throne Star. How's that for incentive? You can also win free turns by recruiting new players.)

The address is:

Mike Singleton
1 Rake Hey Close
Moreton, Wirral
Merseyside L46 6EW
United Kingdom

In my opinion, STARLORD is one of the top five PBM games going. I highly recommend it to all gamers, even those who have never yet tried this type of game.

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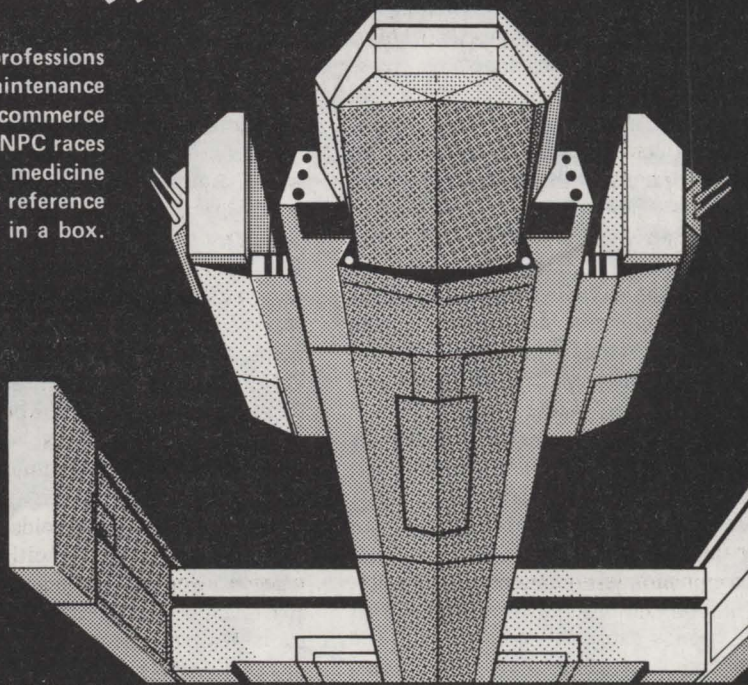

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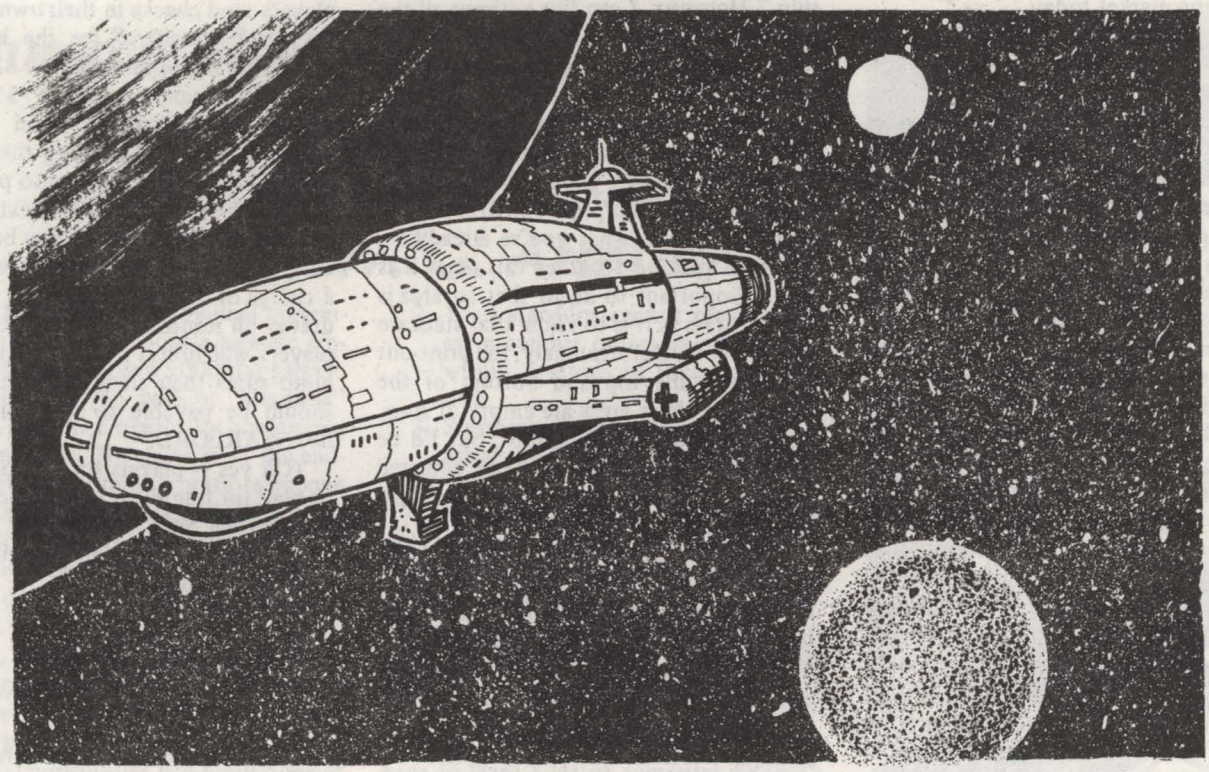


Designer's Notes:

Star Viking

by Arnold Hendrick

STAR VIKING is a strategic game of raids along the far-flung border province of a decadent interstellar confederation. One player directs the activities of small but potent raiding (Viking) forces, while the other defends nine or ten star systems. Although the Federate defender has vastly superior forces, most are immobile and the remainder must spread themselves thin to cover the huge holes in the defense line. Although the title and concept may bring back memories of an H. Beam Piper novel, a re-reading of Piper will reveal that STAR VIKING is quite different. The background is new, planets and technologies are different, and the strategic situation is complicated by the powerful interstellar confederation (something H. Beam's Vikings didn't need to contend with!).

STAR VIKING is not a "kill 'em" battle game, but a political-economic game. Wealth is power, and to preserve that power (and thus win), one must be constantly spending wealth – or at least spending amounts roughly similar to the opposition! Presumably, the Federate provincial governor is trying to make his province look good in the annual review, while the Viking leader is trying to "buy" success in his next annual election. In both cases, profits are everything, and fighting is simply the means to the end. The inability to buy political success with "old" money causes a "keep up with the Jones" syndrome that can cause extremely difficult strategic decisions that rebound tactically in the units available, whether one can risk heavy losses, etc., etc. As a designer, I was trying to make gamers appreciate that the objective in war is not bloodletting – a distinction that certainly escaped American generals in Vietnam, and which has apparently escaped some reviewers of STAR VIKING as well.

The movement system in STAR VIKING required novelty, since everything from interstellar hyperspace drives to marching over the surface of planets was involved. The "tile" system of mini-maps for star systems, with designed-coded "sectors" instead of hexes or squares provided a happy solution. There are no movement factors, just five different letter codes that indicate the type of move(s) allowed. Star systems without space travel just have a habitable planet, while those with at least interplanetary travel begin to show moons and asteroids of economic value, and often orbital cities. (Some systems just have orbital cities, and no habitable planets, representing a very advanced form of civilization.) This is a materially different view of the future than that given by Piper, and represents a synthesis of Gerald O'Neill via *Downbelow Station* (C.J. Cherryh).

As a "futurist," I confess a strong bias toward electronic combat environments. Modern warships and aircraft have largely abandoned armor plate in favor of electronic defenses, and land warfare will gradually follow. STAR VIKING combat mechanics reflect this bias, in that the EW (electronic warfare) rating of a unit has a potent effect in space battles, and a moderate one in ground action. Groundside defenses have the additional advantage of concealment unavailable in space, resulting in orbital cities being uniquely vulnerable, while asteroids and gas giant moons provide superior defense (in defense of the latter point, observe the electromagnetic effects of Jupiter or Saturn). The happy result of this detail is that interesting tactics are possible, including an occasional "ambush," where powerful spaceships hide planetside under a "screen" of inept local defenders, and then rise to strike when the enemy approaches the atmosphere!

In addition to the five major starship classes (excluding the Viking variant designs), the game includes 13 other types of units, three types of starship accessor-

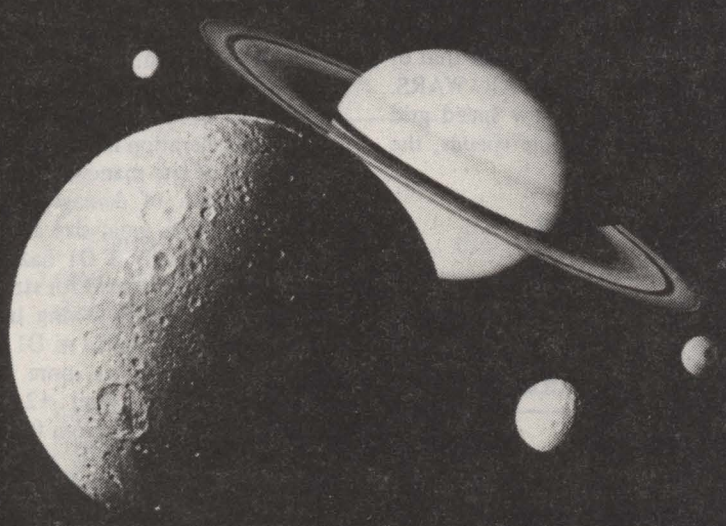
ies, and a host of minor variants for each type of unit. Each unit is nearly unique, so the player able to pay attention to such details may gain a small "edge" over a slap-dash strategist. Obviously, as a designer, my penchant for detail and richness is revealed in this. Then, once this variety was present, it seemed a crime to make it meaningless by reducing combat to a simple odds comparison where you "roll the die and take your chances." In fact, the fate of the Viking player would hang on one or two die rolls in such systems. Therefore, the combat procedure gives each unit its own "shot" and target choice. The usual decision is whether to take "easier" shots against minor targets, or "harder" shots against more powerful ones. A typical problem of Federate defenders is whether to go after the easily destroyed Viking smallcraft and raiding parties, or to try for the difficult shot at Viking spacecraft. However, payoff on spacecraft hits is big – Vikings rarely hang about if their spaceship is being reduced to junk!

The unfortunate penalty in a detailed combat system is that big battles can last 10 to 20 minutes. However, if the Vikings get involved in five or six such actions during a game, their goose is cooked (due to unacceptably high losses). Playtesting proved that the game will have a variety of small skirmishes and slaughters, and two or three major battles. The big battles often determined the flow of the game, and ultimately victory or defeat. However, the major actions sometimes occurred in unexpected places, and the effects were not always evident until two or three turns later! In short, the result was that battles took their place in the strategic panorama, rather than being the "be all and end all" of the game. Yet players had plenty of tactical options and dispositions available, so that a good tactician might inflict a Pyrrhic victory on a superior force.

The combination of economic goals and tactical dangers forces certain considerations on each side. The Federate player is obliged to defend strong his capital and at least some of the high-tech big money star systems. He can gamble a little, but as the Viking player continues to raid and gains a picture of the local defenses, he will eventually figure the average strength defending the big-money systems, and move accordingly. The Viking player normally spends the first half of the game making smaller raids and building his forces, perhaps adding a second starship, and based on the results of those activities, he decides whether to take on the high-tech star systems, and how much he is prepared to gamble in doing so. If the Viking gets desperate, he can always make a few feints and then try an all-out attack on the capital (which, if captured, produces instant victory). Meanwhile, the Federate player often forms one or two "killer task forces" of three or four spaceships and moves about, trying to ambush the Vikings in the course of a small raid. The Federate player also hopes that the home government grants early permisison to build the big battlecruiser, and when it does, he has sufficient funds accumulated to permit such an action! Strategies and tactics evolve differently for each game, and any attempt at "perfect plans" is doomed because the nine or ten star systems used in the game will vary (the nine or ten are selected from a pool of twelve possible systems).

STAR VIKING was designed as a game for strategists, not tacticians. Among the first Dwarfstar releases, I feel it has the greatest variety, scope, sweep, and romance of all. There is something stirring about a monster cruiser screaming through the atmosphere, spilling jump troopers and grav armor into a defensive cynosure of boats, fighters, forts, and ground troops. Perhaps George Lucas can be persuaded to do the movie.

UNIVERSE III



A computer-moderated correspondence game in which each player commands a starship entering a new universe . . . to explore, colonize, and conquer new worlds . . . contending with other players and unknown hazards! Each time you send in a turn, the computer evaluates it with respect to the current game situation and other players' moves, and sends you a printout of your current status. When you "meet" other players, you can send them messages . . . to share information, trade, negotiate or intimidate.

QUALITY – it's a licensed version of UNIVERSE II, rated the most popular PBM game in the country.

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NO DEADLINES – Since you set your own "turn length," you can't miss a turn!

NO EXTRA CHARGES – Our fee is $3 per ship or colony turn. We don't tack on fees for combat.

NO BIG DEPOSITS – Our entry fee is only $7, which covers a setup turn for one ship, rulebook, and one extra turn. Your starship will be assigned as soon as you send your name, address, and entry fee to:

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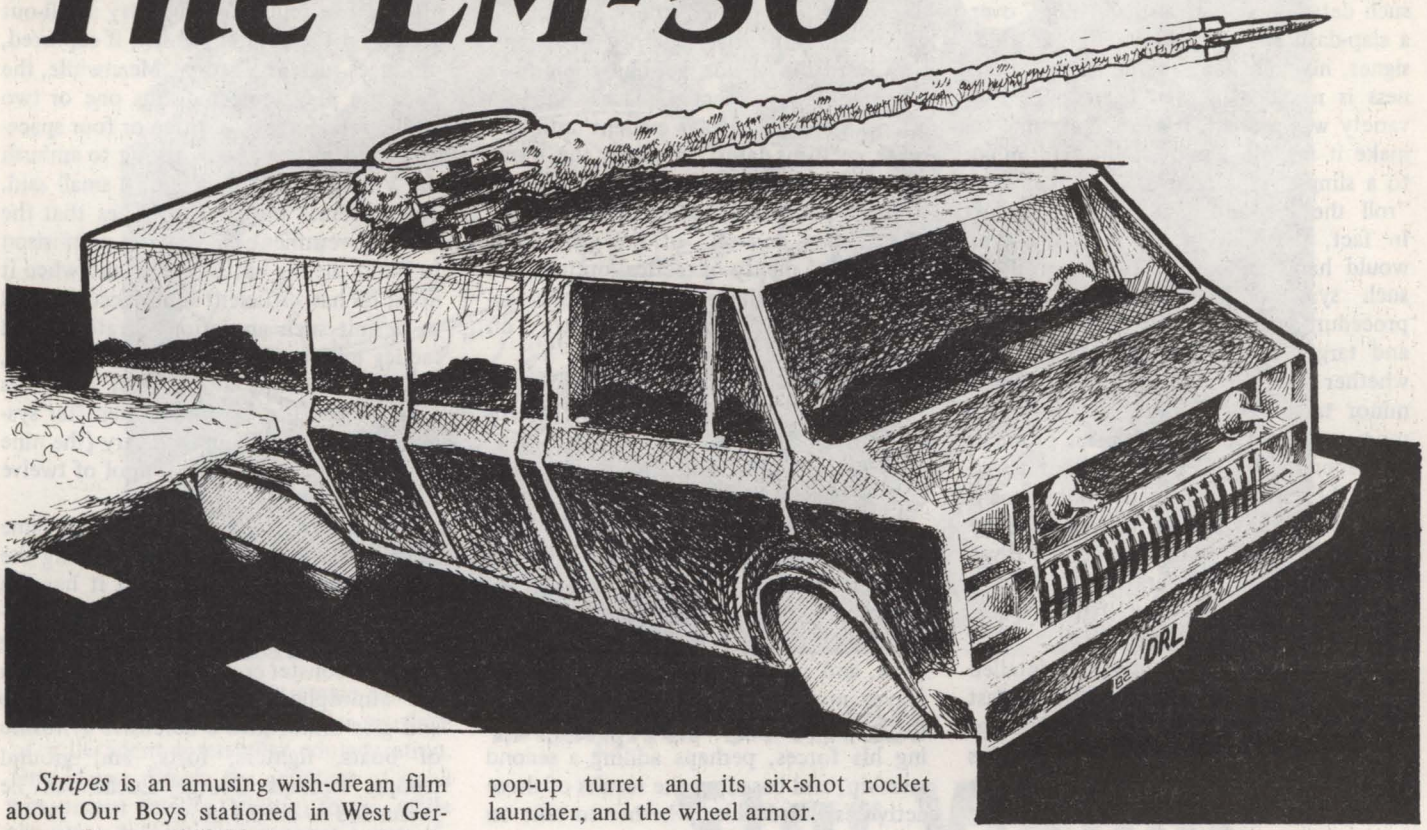
The EM-50



by Chad Irby

Stripes is an amusing wish-dream film about Our Boys stationed in West Germany. It stars Bill Murray as a chronic loser who enlists in the Army and leads a squad of other losers through on-base shenanigans and international incidents. The film's climax has Murray and his cohorts demolish a Czech military base with the EM-50, an armored war machine disguised as a recreational vehicle.

The EM-50 features machineguns, a rocket launcher, an off-loading ramp for assault troops, and other gear perfectly suitable for a CAR WARS scenario.

To adapt the EM-50 to the game and vice versa, we need to introduce several new vehicle components: the 26-foot camper body and an appropriate power plant, the communications center, the pop-up turret and its six-shot rocket launcher, and the wheel armor.

The Camper

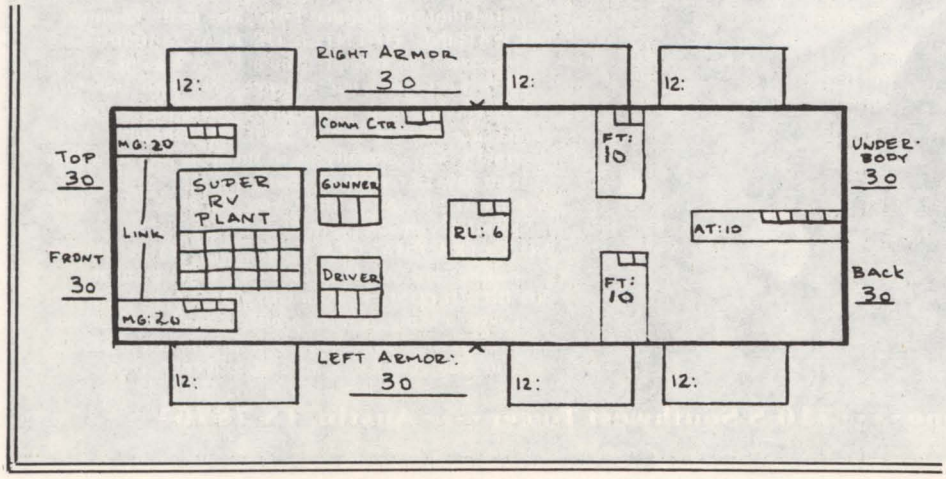
The 26' x 7½' camper body costs $3,000; its weight is 4,000 lbs. It can carry 17,000 lbs. with a standard chassis, and has a 45-space capacity. Armor cost and weight is $60/28 lbs. per point. This chassis always has six wheels.

It is powered by a "super RV" plant, which weighs 2100 lbs., costs $7,000, and takes up ten spaces. Even so, its acceleration is poor. The EM-50 has an acceleration of 2.5 mph per second – half that of the *most sluggish* car in CAR WARS. Rather than make up a new speed grid with twice as many possible speeds, the EM-50 driver must announce acceleration a turn in advance. For instance, on Turn 3 he says he will start to accelerate – but the counter keeps the same speed. On Turn 4 he continues to accelerate, and his speed increases by 5 mph.

The EM-50 may safely decelerate at up to 10 mph per turn. Deceleration of 15 mph is a D2 maneuver doing 2 points of damage to each tire. Each additional 5 mph of deceleration in one turn adds 3 to the hazard of the maneuver and does another 4 points of damage to each tire.

Because of its great size and mass, the EM-50 suffers only a D1 hazard for hitting debris, a D2 hazard for striking other vehicles, and the following hazards for enemy fire: 6 to 9 hits = D1, 10 to 14 hits = D2, and 15 or more hits = D3. However, it's a big target: +2 to hit from the side, no reduction from front or back.

RVs have notoriously poor handling. Subtract 2 from the HC normally allowed by suspension. The EM-50, for instance, has heavy suspension, but only HC 1. The 26' camper body can attempt any maneuver except the tight bend and the bootlegger reverse. It may be represented by a



counter 1¾" x ½" in size (see Figure 1). Note that the vehicle travels 1" per turn – NOT its own length! Maneuvers are handled in similar fashion. (See Figure 2.)

The Communications Center

For game purposes, this will allow the gunner to contact other vehicles or pedestrians who have appropriate shortwave radios. Up to six separate and theoretically private frequencies are available; these may be addressed separately or in any combination. The comm center can take 2 points of damage before it ceases functioning; it will take damage from shots to the starboard side before the gunner will. Takes up one space, weighs 100 lbs., costs $2,000.

Pop-Up Turret

This sort of turret has two advantages. It is hidden until it rises to fire, which means that (a) it cannot be targeted, and (b) your opponent may not even realize that it's there! However, it has no integral armor, so it is very vulnerable to fire while in the "up" position.

A pop-up turret, like a regular one, can hold one or two spaces of weapons, but does not add or subtract from the net space available in a vehicle.

The turret pops up the turn BEFORE it is to fire, and is a target for that turn and any subsequent turn until it drops. It pops up before segment 1, and may be popped down after segment 10 of any turn. It may go down on the same turn it fires – thus, the minimum time it may be up is 1 turn (2 if it fires). Its cost is $2,250, and it weighs 300 lbs. A small (one space) pop-up turret costs $1,250 and weighs 200 lbs.

6-Shot Rocket Launcher

Basically a regular ten-shot rocket launcher remodeled for the pop-up turret; the only difference is that its magazine has a 6-shot capacity. (There is no reason that it couldn't have a full ten shots in the game; it just so happens that it had six in the movie.) Fully loaded with six shots it weighs 230 lbs. and costs $1,210.

Wheelguards

These are armored flaps that hang from the sides of the vehicle and protect the tires. They could be available for any sort of vehicle, weight allowing. Normal wheelguards are in place all the time; retractable guards (such as the EM-50 carries) are more expensive and take up space.

Regular guards are treated like normal armor. Each guard costs $10 and adds 4 lbs. for each point of armor it has. A guard can add up to 10 points of armor – treat each wheel as having a separate guard. When a wheel is hit by any fire, there is a 2/3 chance that the damage will be taken by the guard instead. Roll one die. On a 5 or 6 the wheel is still hit – otherwise the damage is taken by the guard. When the guard is totally shot away, any further damage penetrates to the wheel.

Wheelguards subtract 1 from a vehicle's handling class (until they are totally shot away!). Vehicles over 20 feet long do not suffer this disadvantage – they are less maneuverable to start with.

Regular wheelguards take up no space and are easily visible.

Retractable wheelguards are treated as above, with the following differences:

Cost: Add $250 per wheel.

Weight: Add 50 lbs. per wheel.

Space: One space per pair of wheels. A normal vehicle would expend two spaces for wheelguards. The EM-50 needs 3 spaces.

Retractable guards provide no protection while retracted. Like pop-up turrets, they may be activated before segment 1 of any turn; they provide no protection until the beginning of the next turn, and may be retracted after segment 10 of any

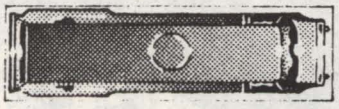


Figure 1

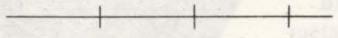
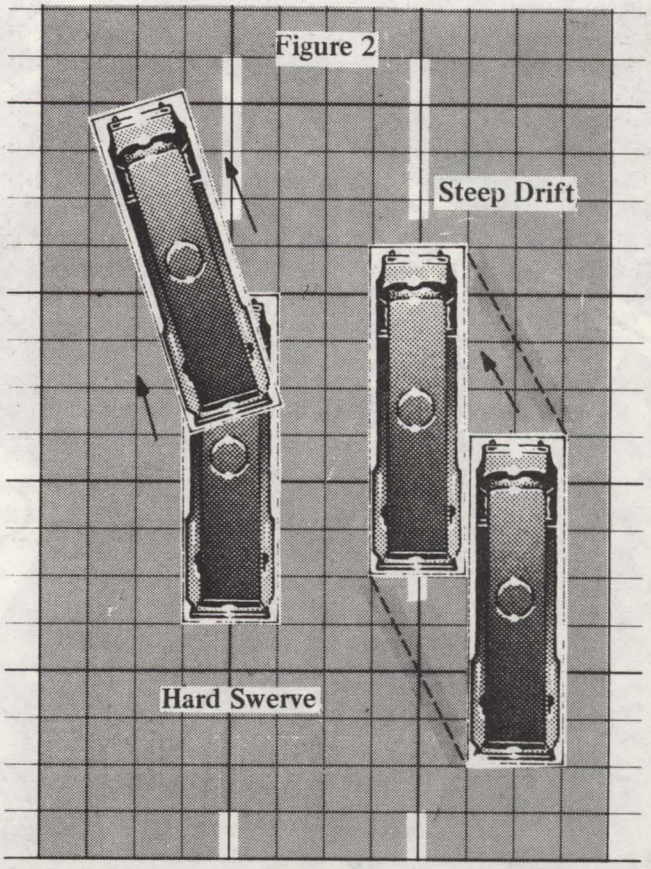


Figure 1, above, shows the counter size of the EM-50 (permission given to reproduce). As noted in the text, the EM-50 does *not* move in units of its own length, but in 1" increments. In Figure 2 (right), two combat maneuvers are shown using this system.



turn. They do not subtract from handling class while retracted.

Assault Ramp

The back of the EM-50 is a ramp which may be dropped at any time to allow troops to disembark. It drops in effectively zero time, but takes one second to close. For game purposes, it may be declared "open" at any time, but may only be declared "closed" after segment 10 of a turn. When it is open, passengers inside may fire out with hand weapons, throw grenades, roll mines out by hand, etc. Any shot that hits the rear of the vehicle will totally bypass rear armor, and will probably clean out the interior!

Using the EM-50

For game purposes, one of the best uses of the EM-50 is as a referee's vehicle in a cross-country scenario. Describe it to the players as a large recreational vehicle with heavy armor but few visible weapons – they can probably see the front MGs, and the port where the rear AT is, but that's all. If they attack it, the wheel-guards will go down, the side FTs will appear from behind knock-off panels, the turret will pop up, and the fun will start. If the attacking force is not overwhelmingly superior, the driver of the EM-50 may try to stop, minimizing his handling-class problems, and then release a number of troops from his vehicle. These will be armed and armored heavily; if they can knock out an attacking vehicle they will attempt to occupy it and use its weapons against the other attackers.

Alternatively, the referee could give the players an EM-50 of their very own, along with a Q-ship assignment . . . cruise the roads to lure out the bandit gang that has been terrorizing the area . . .

Passengers (and Alternatives)

The EM-50 as configured has enough unused space and weight capacity to carry over a dozen troops – body armor, submachine guns and all. This is in keeping with its role in the movie . . . a vehicle designed to deliver a "surprise package" of fighting men to a trouble spot. It could be redesigned to carry fewer troops and more weapons. However, the configuration shown here has only about enough weight for one more large weapon or two smaller ones. Upgrading of the chassis to heavy or even extra-heavy would be necessary if a great deal of weaponry were to be added.

Now, more than ever – drive offensively!

VEHICLE PLANNING SHEET

Vehicle Wt. Capacity			Acceleration		HC	Total $
17,000			2.5 mph		1	$45,910

Item	Cost	Wt.	Spaces	Total Wt.	Spaces Left	Notes
26' van						
Body Size	3000	9000		9000	45	
Chassis Str.						
Power Plant	7000	2100	10	6100	35	
Suspension	4500					HC:1 (Huy)
Tires	3000	450		6550		6 solid
Driver		150	2	6700	33	
Gunner		150	2	6850	31	
Weapon	2000	300	2	7150	29	MG×2
Ammo	1000	100		7250		2 full loads
Weapon	1000	900	4	8150	25	FT×2
Ammo	500	100		8250		2 full loads
Weapon	2000	600	3	8850	22	AT Gun
Ammo	500	600		8950		
Weapon	1000	200	2	9150	20	RL
Ammo	210	30		9180		6 RL shots
Weapon						
Ammo						
Armor	10800	5040		19220		180 pts.
Accessory	2250	300	–	19520	20	pop-up turret
Accessory	4000	–	–	19520	20	2 hi-rez
Accessory	50	–	–	19520	20	MG link
Accessory	6000	100	1	19620	19	Comm Ctr.
Accessory	600	240	3	19880	16	rear wheel guards (6)
Accessory						
Accessory						
Accessory						
Totals	45910			19880		

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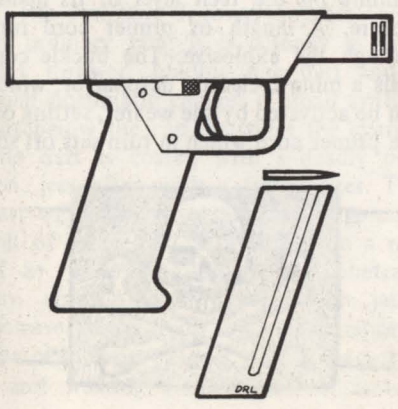
Traveller *Book 3 and various other supplements list certain useful items of equipment for* Traveller *adventurers, while Book 1 and* Mercenary *cover the weapons characters will most often acquire. Yet all these books neglect the special, often concealed, usually illegal weaponry that is the stock and trade of those involved in covert operations – the spy, the assassin, the terrorist, etc. Paranoia Press'* SORAG *supplement on the Zhodani secret intelligence service lists some items of this nature, though many of these are available only to the Zhodani. Following is a listing of other examples of covert equipment and weapons which could be available to some characters through black market contacts, espionage organizations, or the Assassins' Guild. Streetwise may be used as a DM in obtaining these items.*

Small Arms

Needlers are small pistols designed for silent assassination and lethal protection at close ranges. They are similar in size, appearance and performance to the body pistol; the only external differences are the pneumatic charge chamber at the rear in place of the hammer and the smaller hole in the barrel. The Needler is non-metallic and is able to avoid detection where metal detectors are used. A cursory examination will usually identify the Needler as a body pistol if the examiner is unfamiliar with the weapon. The Needler holds a clip of 20 2mm-diameter finned needles. The needles in themselves do little damage (1D-1) unless they strike a vital part of the body (an eye, heart, etc.) where they do 2D-2 damage. However, the needles may be coated with a powerful nerve poison. If any damage at all is taken from a needle, the poison will enter the target's body and, in most cases, will be fatal in seconds. See the section on Nerve Poison below for more details.

The Needler is a Tech 8 weapon. It will be available on a roll of 10+. If the gun is available, so will be the needles and the pneumatic charges. To locate the nerve poison or clips already treated, however, a roll of 11+ must be made.



Use combat modifiers for body pistol. A character's skill level in body pistol minus 1 may be applied. Terrorists may choose Needler as a Special Weapons skill; Assassins may choose it as a Gun Combat skill. Retired assassins of *Traveller* rank 4 or higher may easily locate and purchase Needlers at Assassins' Guild facilities; terrorists with skill in the weapon may take it as a mustering out benefit.

Weight: 275 gms plus 25 gms/clip

Cost: CR750 plus CR50/clip plus CR50/pneumatic charge (fires 40 needles) plus poison cost.

Tools for Terrorists

by William A. Barton

Blackjacks are small clublike weapons used by all types of criminal elements for close fighting. They consist of a small cloth pocket or glove sewn around a heavy clublike weight, often lead pellets, with enough material left to form a handle for gripping it so the weight swings loose. Count a blackjack as a Club-1 to hit, doing 2D-1 damage.

The blackjack is a Tech 3 weapon, weighs 1 kg and costs approximately CR 35. It is easily available, except on law level 9 worlds.

Brass Knuckles consist of a series of metal rings, usually of brass, welded together, which slip over the fingers of one hand and rest over the knuckles. Count brass knuckles as Hand for purposes of hitting, with ST modifiers as for Hand. Damage is Hand+2. Brawling skill level counts as a DM to hit as does Unarmed Combat (but not both; use whichever is higher).

Brass knuckles are Tech 3 weapons. They are easily available, except on law level 9 worlds.

Weight: 200 gms.

Cost: CR 75.

Throwing disks are similar to and used in the same manner as the ancient Terran throwing stars. Most varieties used by assassins are small, thin metal disks with razor-sharp edges, often coated with some form of poison.

Use *Snapshot* "thrown blade" rules. A throwing disk does 1D+1 damage when it hits. Disks will slice through small objects, such as ropes, and will stick in larger objects (walls, trees, people). They will be available anywhere the law level doesn't prohibit the possession of weapons. Note that on worlds where the wearing of brimmed hats is in vogue, larger throwing disks may be found disguised as hat brims, especially in bowlers. Such hat disk weigh 1 kg, cost CR 35, and do 2D+3 damage if they hit; a vital hit does 4D. ST required to throw this type beyond short range is 14+.

Weight: under 100 gms/star.

Cost: CR 150/10 stars, plus poison cost.

Concealed Weapons

Blade Boots appear to be ordinary shoes or boots. However, when an internal switch is activated, either by pressure on a toe switch or by clicking the heels together, an 80mm blade springs from the toe of each shoe. Each blade locks into place and will not recede until a second activation of the switch. For purposes of a hit, the range DMs for Hand+1 are used and the armor DMs for a bayonet are used. Each blade will do 2D damage if a hit is obtained. Either Brawling skill or Unarmed Combat may be used as a +DM to hit when kicking with Blade Boots. Use Hand DMs for ST. A character may only strike with one boot per round.

In addition to their inherent damage, the blades of a boot may be coated with any appropriate poison the characters can acquire. Poison must usually be reapplied after every three times a hit is obtained with a blade.

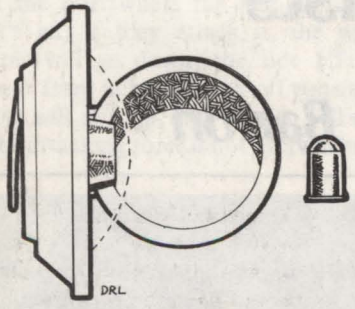
Blade Boots are available at Tech 5 and up. The roll to locate a pair is 9+, as they are popular with the criminal elements.

Weight: 1 kg (does not count against encumbrance when worn).

Cost: CR 250.

Belt Buckle Guns appear to be fancily designed heavy belt buckles, but actually are single-shot close-in emergency weapons. Some models may appear as an actual derringer, others will simply consist of a disguised barrel. When activated by pressure to the back of the buckle, exerted by pushing out the stomach muscles, the weapon section springs open and fires its single shot at any target directly in front of the wearer. A safety catch prevents the gun from firing by accident; it must be released before muscle pressure will trigger the gun. Treat as a body pistol.

Whenever the roll to hit is an unmodified 2, the spring mechanism fails to work. The spring will not work until repaired. When a 2 is rolled, a second 2D roll must be made to determine whether the gun actually does fire in the closed position; a 3- indicates it has and the buckle is ruined. It takes 2 rounds to reload a Belt Buckle Gun if it is being worn, 3 if evading (1 and 2 if it is not worn at the time).



The Belt Buckle Gun becomes available at Tech 6. The gun and ammo will be available in most places on a roll of 8+.

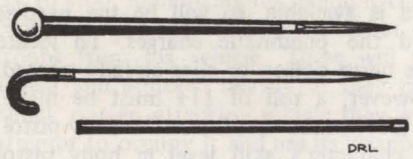
Weight: 300 gms, does not count toward encumbrance.

Cost: CR 350; CR 1/solid slug.

Sword Sticks appear to be ordinary walking sticks or canes, made of wood, plastic or a light metal such as aluminum. However, when the handle is turned, a blade snaps out of the end. Treat the Sword Stick as a bayonet for all purposes including range and armor DMs and damage at short range. At close range, however, treat it as a club, since only the stick part of the weapon can be brought to bear.

The Sword Stick is a Tech 3 weapon. It is approximately 1 meter in length, with another 200mm added when the blade is exposed.

A variant on the Sword Stick is the Sword Cane – a cane-like scabbard which conceals a foil-like blade. Treat this sort of weapon as a foil in every way, with the addition that the scabbard may be used to parry other blades. This gives



a -2DM to anyone trying to hit the wielder with a hand-held weapon. Foil skill only may be applied to this type of weapon. It will have the same availability as the Sword Stick.

Weight: both – 1 kg.

Cost: Sword Stick – CR 250, Sword Cane – CR 150.

Camera Guns are single-shot weapons concealed within a camera. Use combat modifiers as automatic pistol. One-half of any pistol skill (rounded up) can be used as a DM. Damage is 3D-3. The Camera Gun *cannot* take photos. It takes one round to reload the Camera Gun, 2 if the user is evading.

The Camera Gun can be concealed in any camera from the Tech 4 Daguerreotype to the Tech 10 Canolta XA-1 (see *Merchants & Merchandise*) and beyond. Any camera can be converted to a Camera Gun by a character or NPC with Mechanical-3+ (and Electronics-2 for TL 8+ cameras) and the proper tools. Premanufactured camera guns are tech 5+.

Weight: 200gm plus weight of camera shell.

Cost: CR 350 plus cost of camera.

Poison Rings come in two types. Type 1 has a tiny spring-controlled needle which extends when the jewel is pressed or turned in a certain way. The needle is coated with any number of various poisons and is attached to a poison sac within the ring. The victim is poisoned by laying the hand on an exposed part of the body after springing the needle, administering the poison through the needle's prick. This is often done by shaking hands. The needle is very delicate and will pierce no armor; even thick clothes may render it useless. The sac usually contains enough poison for five injections.

Type 2 has a hollow setting which is filled with poison; this is dumped into the victim's drink by turning the setting on its minute hinge, allowing the poison to fall. While the Type 1 ring is almost always undetectable at work, a careless person may be observed using the Type 2.

Poison rings are available from Tech 2 on up. They are freely available on law level 0 planets and can be obtained through the black market just about everywhere else (roll 5+).

Weight: negligible.

Cost: CR 150.

Explosives

Explosives are stock in trade for terrorists, assassins, etc., depending on how messy a job they wish to do. As explosives can be concealed in almost anything, it is unnecessary to list such devices. The following are three special items of particular note. For a listing of various types of explosives, how they are handled, their costs and damage, see Paranoia Press' *Ryker's Catalog of Arms.* Remember that characters must make the explosives mishap roll as in *Mercenary*, with Demo skill as a DM, whenever using explosives.

TDX Cases appear to be – and can be used as – ordinary briefcases, weighing about 1200 gms. The difference is that, under the covering, the briefcase is fashioned entirely from a specially solidified variety of TDX, the gravity-oriented ground-plane explosive from *The Best of the Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society.* What appears to be a combination lock on the case is actually an electronic timer, which can be set to detonate anytime within 10 days. The case itself does the normal damage for 1 kg of TDX, about 12D at "ground zero," with the effects halving every 3m from the 3m diameter central point of the explosion. For even greater effects, the case can be filled with more explosives, up to 3 kgs of TDX, plastic explosives or other types, which will be set off by the detonation of the case itself, doing appropriate damage.

The TDX Case first becomes available at Tech 11. It can be purchased for CR 2000 on most TL-11, law level 0 planets. On other worlds it will only be available on the black market (on a roll of 8+).

Suicide Belts are designed for terrorists, spies or assassins who can't afford to be taken alive on a mission and who wish for the opportunity to take someone with them. They consist of two layers of leather or material sandwiching a layer of either TDX or plastic explosive, depending on the tech level of its manufacture. A length of primer cord runs through the explosive. The buckle conceals a minute electric detonartor, which can be activated by the wearer, setting off the primer cord which in turn sets off the

Belt Buckle Guns appear to be fancily designed heavy belt buckles, but actually are single-shot close-in emergency wea-

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carrying a Demolitions Kit takes a hit from an explosive round or an energy weapon from an angle that could hit the kit, roll 9+ for the kit to be hit and 5+ for the detonators to be set off if hit. Count each blasting cap (electric or not) as worth 1D damage and each

drops the gun rather than catches it; on a roll of 2, he breaks a finger trying to catch the gun as it is propelled into his hand, *then* drops it. It takes one round to retrieve a dropped gun, two evading,

The *Electronic Lock Opener* is a high-tech version of the lock pick kit. It consists of a small battery pack, often disguised as a cigarette lighter, pen or other common item, and two extension wires. The wires are placed in the keyhole of a lock, the device is activated by flicking the switch, and a surge of energy burns through the lock mechanism. The device is effective on any lock on a roll of 3 or more (a 2 fuses the lock shut). The device can be used 50 times before requiring a replacement battery. Its obvious disadvantages are that opening a lock cannot be concealed as the lock is ruined, and that the device can not be legally possessed by anyone who is not a member of a security or police force. In spite of this, it is usually available on law level 0 worlds and on the black market (roll 7+). It is a Tech 9 device and costs CR 600. Replacement batteries cost CR 150. Weight is negligible.

Poison Detection Strips come in handy to assassins and others who routinely deal with poisons and wish to avoid accidental self-poisoning. They resemble tiny strips of litmus paper and are coded to various types of metabolisms. The strips are color-coded by general race (green for humans, orange for Aslan, blue for Droyne, brown for Vargrs, etc.) and come in packs of 50 for CR 25. Each strip is chemically treated to turn black when exposed to a substance harmful or fatal to the metabolism for which it is coded. The strips are used by placing them in contact with the substance to be tested. If the strip turns black, the substance is harmful to the metabolism for which the strip is coded. Care must be taken not to use a type designed for another metabolism than tha

explosive. It can also be set for a delayed explosion, up to 1 hour.

The Suicide Belt weighs 500 to 750 gms, depending on the belt design and how much explosive it contains. It will do 6-9D damage, dispersing as the TDX Case effects above. It has the same availability rolls and restrictions as the TDX Case, except that it is first available at Tech 6. Base price is CR 500 to CR 1500, depending on the explosive (plastic is cheaper). It is available on 8+.

The *Demolitions Kit* is a standard accessory for those who work with explosives – not only criminals, but commandos, combat engineers, and others. The standard kit is available at Tech 7 and consists of 20 blasting caps (CR 5); 20 electric blasting caps (CR 8); 2 chemical timers (CR 5 each); 2 mechanical timers (CR 10 each); 2 electric timers (CR 15 each); 1 electronic timer (CR 20); 5m primercord (CR 1/m); special tools: knife, screwdriver, pliers, wire cutter, etc. (CR 30) – all in a special carrying case for CR 180 base price (higher where difficult to get). The make-up of the kit may vary somewhat depending on tech level and on the purpose for which it is to be used. Cases may be of the hard-case type (count as cloth armor) or soft shoulder bags. Most cases have room for up to 4 kgs of explosives. The basic Demolitions Kit itself weighs 2.5 kg; soft bags weigh only 2 kg.

Whenever a character wearing or carrying a Demolitions Kit takes a hit from an explosive round or an energy weapon from an angle that could hit the kit, roll 9+ for the kit to be hit and 5+ for the detonators to be set off if hit. Count each blasting cap (electric or not) as worth 1D damage and each meter of primer cord as worth 2D damage. All timers will be ruined if the kit explodes.

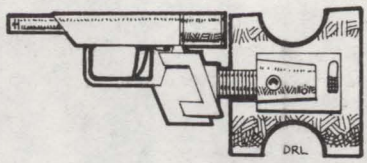
Demo Kits are generally available wherever explosives may be obtained (legally or otherwise).

Accessories

The *Pen/Dart Thrower* appears to be an ordinary pen. It is actually a small dart thrower, holding one dart and a small pneumatic charge. A small switch, just below the cap, activates the charge. The dart is coated with a deadly poison, less often with a tranquilizer. The dart will hit a target at close range on a roll of 5+ and at short range on a roll of 8+. It is not designed to penetrate any armor more resiliant than jack. However, if the to-hit roll at close range is 10+ or at short range a 12 and the target is not wearing a sealed suit of armor, the dart will have hit an unarmored part of the target's body. The dart is good for only one use.

The Pen/Dart Thrower is a Tech 8 device. It is standard issue for espionage agents of the Ministry of Justice, SORAG and other such services. Fully loaded with dart and charge, the pen weighs 75 gms; this does not count against encumbrance. The Pen costs CR 500 base price, CR 25 for replacement charges, CR 5 for replacement darts. Poison prices and availability vary with the exact poison.

Spring Holsters are small, spring-powered holsters which are worn on the wrist, concealed under the sleeve. The spring mechanism is triggered by a quick flick of the wrist, propelling the gun into the hand of the wearer. The user of the Spring Holster must have had at least six weeks practice with the holster for proper operation, learning how to avoid triggering the spring mechanism unintentionally. Anyone who attempts to use the Spring Holster without the training period must roll 2D whenever he activates it. On a roll of 8 or less, he



drops the gun rather than catches it; on a roll of 2, he breaks a finger trying to catch the gun as it is propelled into his hand, *then* drops it. It takes one round to retrieve a dropped gun, two evading. A broken finger will make it impossible to fire a gun with that hand. Proper use of the Spring Holster eliminates the -3DM for drawing and firing a weapon in the same round.

The Spring Holster first becomes available for use at Tech 7. It costs CR 250 and weighs 500 gms minus the weapon. The holster is designed for small guns such as the derringer or the body pistol, and any such gun (including the Needler) can easily be attached to the holster mechanism. Spring Holsters may be worn completely concealed under most forms of clothing or armor. Characters may choose Spring Holster as a Special Weapon skill in lieu of Quick-draw Holster (or as a Gun Combat skill in other services if the referee so allows) in place of the six-week training period. Higher levels of skill than 1 give no further benefits. The Spring Holster is available on 7+.

The *Electronic Lock Opener* is a high-tech version of the lock pick kit. It consists of a small battery pack, often disguised as a cigarette lighter, pen or other common item, and two extension wires. The wires are placed in the keyhole of a lock, the device is activated by flicking the switch, and a surge of energy burns through the lock mechanism. The device is effective on any lock on a roll of 3 or more (a 2 fuses the lock shut). The device can be used 50 times before requiring a replacement battery. Its obvious disadvantages are that opening a lock cannot be concealed as the lock is ruined, and that the device can not be legally possessed by anyone who is not a member of a security or police force. In spite of this, it is usually available on law level 0 worlds and on the black market (roll 7+). It is a Tech 9 device and costs CR 600. Replacement batteries cost CR 150. Weight is negligible.

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Nerve poison is the lethal substance recommended for use with the Needler. A small amount will generally be fatal to any victim whose bloodstream it reaches. If a victim's EN is 12+, he has a 10+ chance of survival; if he survives the poison, he will be paralyzed for 2d weeks. Appropriate anti-toxins, such as the Universal Anti-Toxin from *SORAG*, will reduce the paralysis to 2D days if injected within 6 hours after the victim is poisoned. Once a victim recovers use of muscle function, he will be at half ST, DX and EN for 2D weeks.

20 doses of nerve poison cost CR 250. It first becomes available at Tech 6 and is highly illegal. Weight is negligible.

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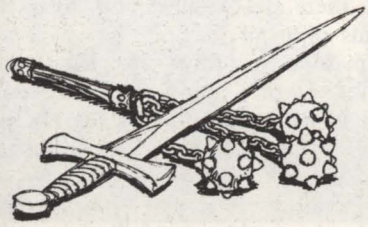
D&D Without Magicians

by Lewis Pulsipher

My favorite AD&D character class is the magic-user, and when I conducted a survey of players in Britain several years ago, the MU was by far the most popular type. Yet in some campaigns the magic-users seem to be almost non-existent, particularly as "monsters" but also as player-characters. And in some other fantasy role-playing games, such as *RuneQuest,* all characters are basically warriors even if they use a few spells. Why do these groups and games eschew the MU, and what are the pros and cons of this kind of campaign?

First, every monster becomes much more fearsome when the players cannot rely on their magic-users to blow it away, *charm/hold* it, or otherwise defeat it. Whereas in a magic-campaign enough orcs can be *slept* to severely weaken a group of ten, and perhaps break their morale, in a non-magic campaign 10 orcs are a formidable obstacle for a low-level party. It is no longer possible to use *lightning bolts* to wear down giants (or dragons). Consequently, the DM can scare the hell out of players *without* using a horde of monsters. One giant suffices where two to four were needed before. And in every encounter, if the players want to defeat the monster they must risk their lives hand-to-hand; they can't stand aside and "let the mage do it."

Because there are fewer monsters, and because he doesn't need to worry about interpretations and adjudications of magic spells, the DM's job is easier. (On the other hand, he has less to work with, since he can rarely use magic-using monsters.)



The absence of magic makes the party more heroic, in a sense. True, they no longer face the prospect of a dragon-hunt with equanimity, since they have no MU to rely on, but neither are the fighters reduced to a subordinate role. Now the "heroes" are the warriors, not the MU. The game more closely follows standard heroic fiction, in which the magician (if there is one) is usually a villain and rarely a protagonist. (Gandalf was more cleric than MU, and even at that he is an exception.) Now the men are *men,* not cowardly magicians who won't get their weapons wet!

Lack of magicians also encourages overall risk-taking, since the party no longer worries about a *fireball* or *lightning bolt* which might slaughter some and cripple the rest. The over-cautious types will go forward more often than in the past.

Moreover, low-level parties no longer need fear *sleep* spells from the opposition. There is no incentive to increase party size just to provide a cushion against *sleep.* (I used to see parties of 15-20 first level characters using D&D rules, and at least 10 using AD&D, to insure that some would stay awake.)

Magic items (as opposed to magicians) can still be used. Insofar as the spells are absent from the game, magic items will be appreciated all the more. An ESP potion isn't worth much in a party of fifth levels, because there is probably an MU who can cast the same spell. But in a party without an MU, the same potion could be very valuable. If MU-usable-only items are included, the other classes should be allowed to use them at some risk or decrease in efficiency, after a well-hidden secret formula or ritual has been discovered.

I think clerics should be retained in this version of the game. Holy men add a lot to any campaign, and their magic is not of the overwhelming offensive variety available to MUs. Clerics are really second-line fighters who can cast minor spells.

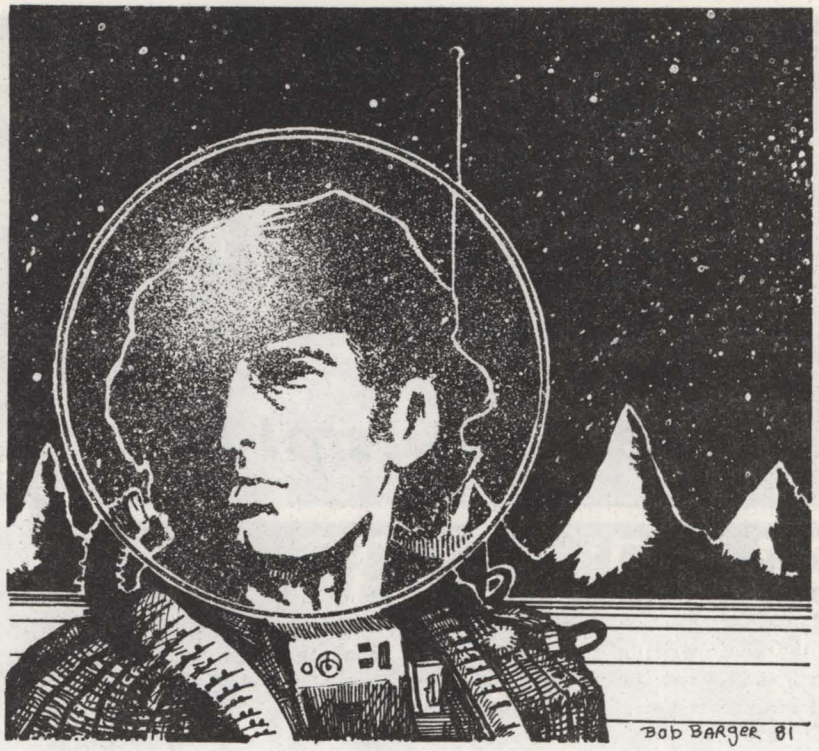
There are disadvantages to this style of play. The worst is that it encourages hack-and-slash. Unless the DM works hard to provide puzzles, hints, and information, and sometimes confronts the players with monsters too tough for them to handle, the players will get into the hack-groove: charge forward, hack 'em up, rip off the treasure, *cure,* find another monster, charge, hack . . . If over-tough monsters appear (with some warning which the players may or may not have recognized), the worst hack-and-slashers will kill themselves off. There is no escaping the focus on combat in this "variant," however. In fact, one could say that much of the attraction of other fantasy role-playing games is that magic is weaker and combat more complex than in D&D. AD&D melee is designed to be fast and simple, not the be-all and end-all it can become in, say, *RuneQuest,* or *DragonQuest.* If you run a no-magicians campaign you may want to add combat options and rules to increase the tactical interest of the melee.

Second, the no-MU variant removes the DM's most powerful weapon: the evil wizard. Nonetheless, because other monsters automatically gain in relative power, this is worth the trade. And if the DM feels he can justify the rare appearance of an evil MU, the impact is much greater than in the usual magic-cluttered campaign. The fearsome nature of magic is restored to its traditional magnitude.

People who prefer to be magic-users might not like this variant, but many players will find it leads to better role-playing and better games.

PBM games tend to take one of two forms – the large role-playing game with hundreds of players or the smaller, computer-moderated game having a more limited number of participants. We opted for the large role-playing game because it would make more of an initial "splash" and establish us quickly as a PBM company. If we had gone with the computer moderated type of game, it would have taken several of them before we could have a firm foothold in the PBM gaming industry.

Once the type of game was chosen, the real work began. It was apparent that to design an interesting science fiction environment would mean including most of the items one could read about in science fiction literature. We designed starships and colonies and equipped them with items that could be added/deleted so that a player could effectively customize his own starship within its fixed hull structure. Each piece of equipment was given its own individual characteristics of mass and operational capabilities.



Beyond the Stellar Empire

Designers' Notes

by Robert Cook and Jack Everitt

Some of the items developed in this way were space fighters, sensors, battle computers, energy weapons, shuttles, and the list goes on to include some very original items (which I cannot include here since many players have not yet become aware of them in the present game).

To acquire the multitude of items available, complex market reports were begun for each colony in the game. A colony with a large market report can easily fill an entire page. It was apparent that a computer would be necessary to handle it.

As the design process continued, we added another type of position to BSE – that of ground party leader. This is really a spin-off of a starship or colony position that allows a player to more intimately explore a planet.

Movement

The movement system for BSE was rather difficult to finalize. We knew that movement from world to world would have to be quick or it would be impossible to rationalize a Stellar Empire. We also wanted to link other actions (probing planets, scanning colonies, etc.) into the movement system. Movement points were used in two early versions and proved to be inadequate. We finally chose the method of assigning time units (TUs) to each type of movement and action in the game. A play would begin each turn with 70 TUs to work with. This would represent a week's worth of actions, allowing us to establish a time pattern consistent throughout the universe. The time scheme was expanded even further so that each year contained 52 weeks (numbered 1-52) and each year was numbered 180, 181, etc. (for 1980, 1981, etc.). The final addition to this was to calculate adjustments for player positions weekly. (Player adjustments include such things as people healing, people dying from lack of life support, etc.) These adjustments were integrated into the computer program.

Now that the movement system was functional, each solar system was mapped and laid out to include planets, suns, asteroids, etc. A player can obtain one of these system maps by jumping into a system and simply requesting one. Furthermore, each planet is mapped and laid out on a grid. This grid consists of sectors 200 x 200 miles across. Moons are mapped in an identical pattern. Each sector is then further broken down into 100 squares. Players can land their ships in one of these squares and explore. As you can see, there are literally hundreds of thousands of maps in BSE. To get a world map, a player probes the planet and receives the map plus a "blurb" describing the planet. These blurbs are computer printed. Maps contain such information as type of atmosphere, gravity, and temperature. If a player wishes to explore the world more fully, he can form

a ground party and do so. Every world has terrain, and may have flora, fauna and native races.

Combat

Since BSE is a continuous game, it was necessary to design the combat system so that certain standing orders were on file at all times in the event that a ship or colony was attacked between turns. This need was fulfilled by allowing players to program their onboard battle computers. These battle computers control your ship during actual battle, and use programmed options to fire, maneuver or flee the battle. It was felt that a star captain would wish to have quite detailed control of his ship's actions in battle. Some of the battle options include fleeing if the enemy has more than a certain number of hulls, fleeing upon receiving excessive damage to any one of the ship's sections, fleeing if the enemy is hitting you and you are not able to return fire equally, retargeting to another enemy ship if your current target is not moving or firing, etc.

Each position has an "Enemy List." You indicate ships/colonies or ground parties on this list. If you encounter any of them at any time during your movement you will attack them. Names can be added or deleted from the enemy list at any time. Best of all, your enemy list is printed out every turn so you can be aware of who is listed there.

Ground combat is also fully computer moderated. In this type of combat, we allow modifiers to be introduced into the program which runs the battle. This means that if you send a detailed battle plan, you can earn an advantage. Ground battle involves such units as troops, tanks, robotic defense bunkers and troop carriers. Aircraft are also integrated into the system.

Ground battle is fought in rounds. The ending round of a ground battle is not known beforehand. It is determined by the "Aggression Rating" of the participants. This aggression rating is the percent loss that each side will accept before retreating and ending the battle. While the average ground battle is 10-15 rounds long, it can easily last 25 or more rounds.

Colonies

While starships are the primary focus of BSE, they could not exist without colonies to supply them. Designing a colony was not difficult at first, but they kept becoming more and more detailed as the game progressed. We wanted a real base of operations, which would include a market containing dozens of items to buy, a place to gather information, a repair site and a governor to control it all. This is what a colony looks like to a starship commander. However the governor of such a colony would have a different view. How do I feed my colonists? Can I get enough raw materials for my factories? Are the prices in my market too high or too low? Do I have enough people to maintain my colony? Are my defenses adequate, etc. A colony position is as complex to play as a starship position.

Finally, sort of a last minute addition was incorporated into BSE. The *Capellan Periphery Times* was established as the game newspaper. This publication contains only game news written by "impartial" reporters. There is no company news or other propaganda in this publication. The newspaper is published approximately monthly, and is distributed to each player.

As we look back over the work done on BSE, we can say that we are very proud of our accomplishments and innovations. From the comments received from players, it appears that they are equally satisfied.

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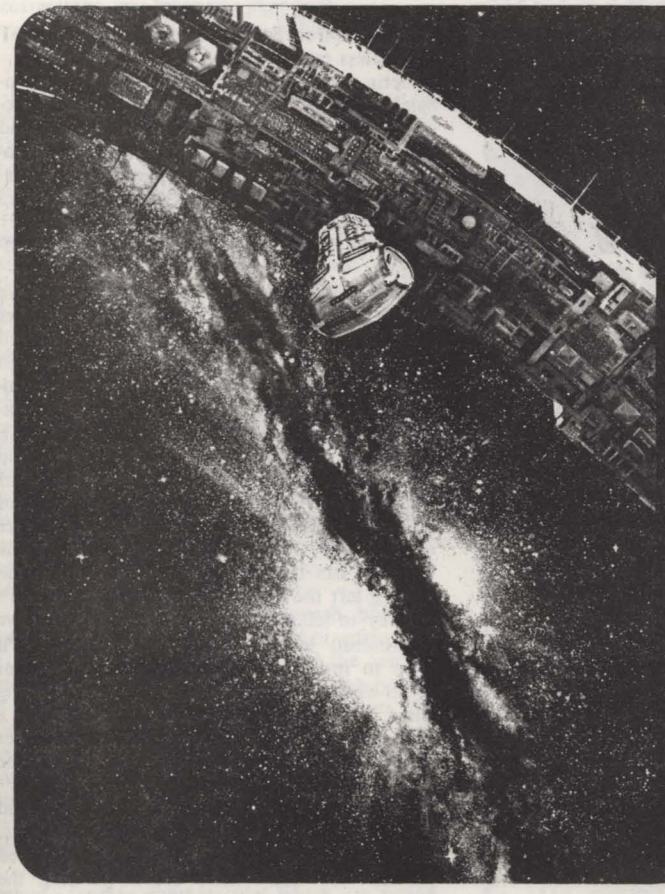

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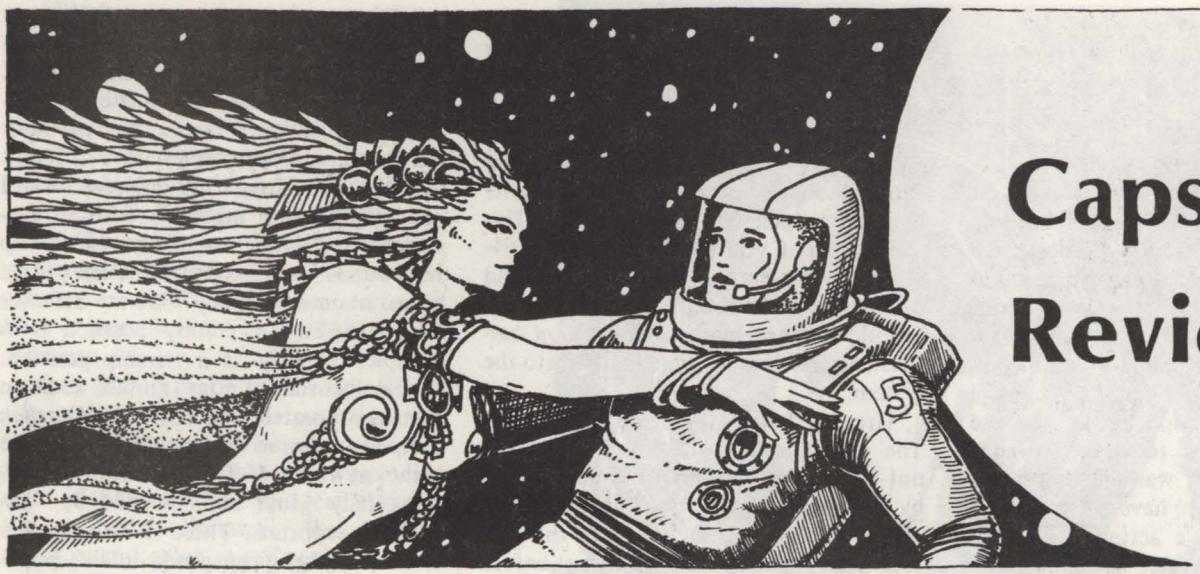

Capsule Reviews

THE SPACE GAMER reviews board games, role-playing games, computer games, video games, and game supplements. We review play-by-mail games if a reviewer is enrolled. We will review any science fiction or fantasy game if the publisher supplies a copy. We do not guarantee reviews of historical wargames. TSG may publish a review of a game we are not sent – IF a reader submits a review.

The staff will make reasonable efforts to check reviews for factual accuracy, but opinions expressed by reviewers are not necessarily those of the magazine.

Games for which reviews have been assigned or received include: *The Book of Mars, Duel Magical, Empire I, Heroic Expeditions, The House on Hangman's Hill, Interstellar Skirmishes, Legend of the Sky Raiders, Misty Wood, Power Play, Seldon's Compendium of Starcraft, Sorcerer of Siva,* and *The Tower of Indomitable Circumstance.*

Games for which we are currently seeking reviewers include: *Grand Master* and *Space Ace 21.*

FEDERATION SPACE (Task Force); $14.95. Designed by Stephen G. Wilcox. One 16-page rule/scenario book, 432 die-cut counters, 11" x 17" map, tactical combat display/CRT sheet, five fleet organization charts, two six-sided dice. 2-8 players; playing time 1-2+ hours. Published 1981.

Task Force's long-awaited strategic component to its *Star Fleet Battles* system, is finally at hand. While some may be disappointed by its simplicity, FEDERATION SPACE proves to do quite adequately what its designers intended. The game consists of a strategic map of the area of space surrounding the United Federation of Planets. The map is based on those in the *Star Fleet Technical Manual* and in SFB and, even with some distortions to make the game more playable, is a satisfying representation. Counters represent most of the ship types introduced in SFB and the first expansion kit, including a few ships from the forthcoming second expansion kit – only the Andromedans are missing. Ships have a movement rating, an attack strength and a defense strength printed on the counter, which abstractly approximate their SFB abilities. Movement is conducted on the map and combat on a tactical display with ships squaring off against each other, similar to that of GDW's *Imperium*. Ten scenarios range from a three-turn Klingon assault on the Tholians to a free-for-all campaign game. For those who find the combat system too simplistic there are also guidelines on linking FEDERATION SPACE with *Star Fleet Battles.*

FEDERATION SPACE plays quite well, with or without the SFB link. It is relatively fast-moving and easy to learn and play, even for those who may have felt SFB itself too complex. Fleet organization restrictions help balance the scenarios by tying up units on certain fronts (can't send all the Fed forces against the Romulans, 'cause those sneaky Klingons may attack from behind).

Problems are generally minor. Some distortions in scale are evident, but these aid playability. A couple rules need clarification – criteria for controlling a system are a bit vague, for example. Combat can be a problem, as a battle can as often be decided by lucky die rolls as by strategy (though the better strategist should prevail in the long run); those bothered by this, however, can and probably will resort to the SFB tie-in.

FEDERATION SPACE succeeds in its purpose to present a relatively simple, playable *Star Trek* game which can serve as a strategic module for *Star Fleet Battles*. Recommended to Trek gamers everywhere.

– William A. Barton

HELLTANK (Metagaming); $3.95. Designed by Phillip S. Kosnett. Boxed micro: 12½" x 14" color map, 126 die-cut counters, 4" x 7" 28-page rulebook, 7" x 8" play-aid sheet, one die. Two players; playing time 20-90 minutes. Published 1981.

The map shows a city, wooded hills, a canal, and a highway. Players pick a scenario (delaying action, depot evacuation, city attack, recon mission, or helltank breakthrough) and a time period (2005-2040 in seven segments). Points are spent to purchase units, with cost and availability depending on the year. During turns, players alternate "executing" (moving and attacking) with one unit at a time (a unit can move, fire, then move again). Enemy units can fire at executing units ("opfire"). Combat is ranged, and every unit has a "to hit" number depending on the kind of unit it is firing at. A hit destroys the target. Most units need a line-of-fire to their targets; missiles and guns don't, and fire at every unit in the hex they attack. Basic rules cover the usual sort of weapons, including helicopters and missile-launched minefields. Intermediate rules add multi-turreted tanks that fire three times per turn. Advanced rules add "quake" missiles that attack entire megahexes, and helltanks with six player-chosen weapons and the ability to take damage from hits rather than croaking.

Three cheers for a fresh design! This is NOT a mindless copy of *Ogre.* It is a subtle game – sometimes a scenario will seem hopelessly unbalanced until you chance upon the right tactics. It is both challenging yet swift-playing, and with 25 possible scenario/time period combinations there is plenty of replay value. Metagaming has also done a decent job on the map and counters – they look good, although they aren't the works of art some publishers are putting out.

Now let's talk about the stupid, avoidable flaws. The rules are full of holes. A rules lawyer will cheer, a novice will despair. An experienced player can make the assumptions that seem to be called for but it's unprofessional and a nuisance. Some rules are given only in the examples (but one example contradicts the rules). Then there's playability: you need to keep track of seven facts for each unit, but the rules give you markers and facing requirements for only five facts; the rest you've got to memorize or write down on paper (Has the MTT opfired? How far can the AH still move?). Plus, Metagaming left the IDs off the counters, so there's no way to tell ACs apart even though they have customized individual armament, and you'll have to invent a way to track the firing for multi-weaponed units. Blue terrain isn't defined. (I ignored it.) The line-of-fire rules have a huge flaw involving slopes and cliffs. Examples of play aren't given for the basic game. The counters are hard to read.

In short, HELLTANK got shortchanged somewhere in production. I do like the game, but I can recommend it only for experienced gamers who don't mind second-guessing the rules on a few vital points and who don't mind

doing mental bookkeeping. Too bad – this game *could* have been a contender.

– W. G. Armintrout

SPACE OPERA, 2nd Ed. (FGU); $18.00. Designed by Edward E. Simbalist, A. Mark Ratner and Phil McGregor. Two 8½" x 11" 90-page rulebooks, four 8½" x 11" cardstock chart and information sheets, boxed. 2 or more players; playing time indefinite. Published 1981.

FGU has at last released a corrected 2nd edition of their *Space Opera* SF RPG that helps take the system closer to its claim of being "the most complete science fiction role playing game ever produced." Although approximately 90% of the material in the new edition is the same as in the 1st, the changes made are significant. In addition to the new, more attractive cover (including a Wookie-like character and a near-topless heroine), improvements include the clearing up of nearly all the annoying typos that plagued the first edition, and a number of clarifications of some of the ambiguous rules.

One of the more notable improvements is the addition of a method for characters to obtain psionic scores of 17, 18 and 19 during initial generation – a serious omission in the 1st edition. Of course, the changes in the 2nd edition don't make SO any less complex. Those who prefer simplier systems won't find it much more accessible than the 1st edition. Also, there are still sections of the rules that are less than clear and must be left to each individual SM to interpret.

Still, for those who liked *Space Opera* originally or for those who thought it had potential but were turned off by the typos, omissions, etc., the 2nd edition is definitely worth having. (Note: An errata sheet is available for those who have the 1st edition and don't want to buy the 2nd, though it does not include typo corrections, just the major changes.)

– William A. Barton

THE SPAWN OF FASHAN (Games of Fashan, POB 182, Norman, OK 73070); $8.95. Designed by Kirby Lee Davis. 90-page rulebook. 2 or more players; playing time indefinite. Published 1981.

Primarily, SPAWN is a lengthy character generation system leading to a complex combat system. Of course there are the usual conventions: movement, magic and encounters. An unusual character advancement system has both "level" increase and improvement of basic statistics.

The piece de resistance is combat. Each character is unique, with basic statistics and individual attributes allowing aimed blows, fatigue effects, parrying, dodging, critical hits, and specific penetration factors for different weapons and armor. There's far greater simulation of melee than most games, with less complication than those games which try to be as realistic, and there are some fascinating new ideas such as a 6th sense capability.

SPAWN could have been superb, but it is ruined by abominable writing and proofreading. It took four readings to figure out the combat rules and I'm still hazy on one or two points. Sections of the rules are mislabelled or left out, and you're referred to tables ostensibly vital to play – which you're then told you are supposed to create yourself. I'm all for creativity, but one buys a game for rules out of which to create; SPAWN requires you to first write rules.

THE SPAWN OF FASHAN is a fascinating set of fantasy combat rules which are trying to become a full role-playing game. Future planned supplements may allow SPAWN to become the excellent FRPG which the author's enthusiasm and inventiveness have tried to create. However, its current value seems limited to experienced FRPG players who want something novel. Beginners will be baffled, and gamers happy with their current rules will find little reason to journey to the far planet of Fashan.

–Ronald Pehr

SUPPLEMENTS

THE CORSAIRS OF CYTHERA (Ragnarok Enterprises); $1.50. Designed by Jon Schuller. Adventure for *D&D* or *Ysgarth Rules Systems*. One 8½" x 5½" 9-page book. 2 or more players; playing time 1½-2 hours. Published 1981.

The Achajaian fleet attacks Carzal, imperial capital of Ilchania, in twelve days! Only timely intervention by THE CORSAIRS OF CYTHERA might save the empire. To earn the lavish reward promised, a half-dozen characters, experience level 4-9, must sail pirate-infested seas, fight monsters, then try to convince the world's toughest pirate that he really wants to be pals.

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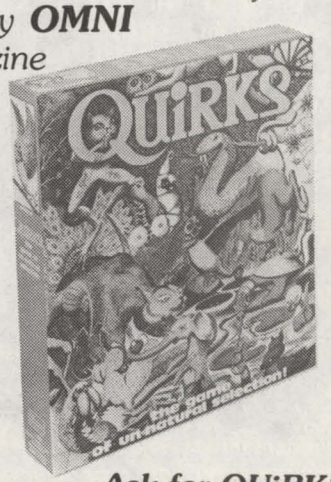

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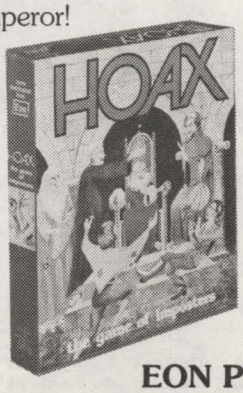

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CORSAIRS OF CYTHERA isn't as much fun for the referee. Information on the extremely important pirate ship encounters, and the interesting parts of the pirate city, is sketchy and inadequate. Judicious handling of encounters is necessary to keep characters at the low end of the recommended experience range in the game, and there are a couple of references to *Ysgarth Rules* not translated into *D&D* terms. (The former game rules are produced by this company but are not yet commercially available.) As with other Ragnarok Enterprises products, the print is painfully small.

THE CORSAIRS OF CYTHERA costs less than half as much as most fantasy game supplements, and lacks the detail and complexity of the better ones. But it does provide an exciting, entertaining adventure. If the referee doesn't mind putting up with its flaws, the players will be satisfied.

– Ronald Pehr

JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE CIRCLE (Wilmark Dynasty); $3.50. Designed by Micaela X. Corradin. 12-page FRP supplement. 2 or more players; playing time indefinite. Published 1981.

In this adventure a party is sent to a legendary shrine of Good in response to a request for help. Once there, the characters undergo various tests to prove their faith and prowess. In other words, this is a form of the "halls of testing" style of FRP, in this case using tricks and saving throws more than monsters. As with all such efforts I have seen, this sometimes smacks of a lottery, but at least no one is faced with an exact duplicate of himself to fight.

The ten characters provided (average fifth level) are all crippled in some way – ostensibly to give them an incentive to go to this shrine to earn healing. I suspect that the scenario was devised for the author's campaign to provide a gimmick by which players could restore crippled characters to playable condition.

The format for room descriptions is choppy and wasteful of space. Some of the references, such as "Defense +4, Type III," "remarkable strength," and "agility" are evidently related to the variant D&D rules used. At any rate, such entries are not explained. As in *Burgundy Pit,* the maps are scaleless freehand drawings. The calligraphy is different from, through no better than, the dry transfer lettering used in most publications.

Some typos will sneak into any publication, but this module has far more than its share, and some of the errors are obviously grammatical rather than typographical. This is unnecessary as well as tiresome.

With some *tough* editing, this module might have been worth publication in a magazine as an example of an unusual approach to FRP. But as a separate module it is as overpriced as *Burgundy Pit,* and is otherwise not equal to the *Pit*'s modest standard. Unless you're really sold on the idea of halls of testing, save your money.

–Lewis Pulsipher

MARANANTHA-ALKAHEST SECTOR (Judges Guild); $5.98. Designed by Dave Sering. Approved for *Traveller.* One 32-page guidebook, 22" x 34" stellar map, backprinted with planetary maps. Published 1982.

MARANANTHA-ALKAHEST SECTOR is the fourth sector in the *Traveller* universe from Judges Guild, completing their Gateway Quadrant. Like *Crucis Margin,* the Marananthа-Alkahest sector consists mostly of small independent states. The Imperium and the nearby Hive federation have little influence in the area. As with past JG sectors, the supplement includes individual subsector maps, the large sector map backed with maps of some of the more interesting planets and rumor and encounter tables.

The various states and independent worlds make adventuring in Maranantha-Alkahest potentially quite exciting. The lack of a strong Imperial presence and the small areas of the states can be a plus for groups of players who like lawless plundering. The rumors and encounters presented are interesting and varied – many having more than one possible outcome – and can be stepping stones to complete adventures much the same way the situations in GDW's *76 Patrons* are. Unlike earlier JG sectors, the individual subsectors are marked off by broken lines on the large sector map, making it easier to tell where you are (though with the small states, this is not so crucial).

The only real problem with this supplement is the usual, sloppy JG editing. The large map is a bit unwieldly, as have been all of JG's maps of late. Overall, however, MARANANTHA-ALKAHEST SECTOR provides some more interesting places to adventure and is recommended to those who want to further add to their atlases of the *Traveller* universe.

– William A. Barton

MARINAGUA (Group One); $6.95. Approved for *Traveller.* 8½" x 11" book, 17" x 22" map, bagged. 2 or more players; playing time indefinite. Published 1981.

MARINAGUA is the latest of Group One's *Traveller* adventure settings in their Theta Borealis sector. Like past G1 adventures, it features a gaudy cover – this one of two inhabitants of Marinagua beating the whatever out of each other, with a subtitle of "Murder and Mayhem on Marinagua!" There is also a brief description of the planet, plans and descriptions of a major city, an "invincible bastion" and an underground palace, and encounter tables. It provides no guidelines for adventure, but merely presents a setting that the referee may use as he pleases, this one being that of a law level 0 world with rampant lawlessness. The accompanying map provides a colorful picture of the planet's surface, though its actual utility is questionable.

As usual, the most interesting aspect of this

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adventure is the animal section, though the fauna of Marinagua is considerably less imaginative than in past G1 adventures. Most descriptions are somewhat more complete than in some previous G1 offerings. Some areas of the planet could prove challenging to even heavily armed strike forces, for players who enjoy that sort of an adventure.

Overall, however, MARINAGUA seems rather dull and colorless (cover excepted, of course) with little real reason for players to wish to adventure there. The only real hook (unless players just want to go in and shoot things up) is the palace of riches. However, its defenses should thwart all but full-fledged *Mercenary* groups with heavy support. The usual G1 production problems are evident here, too.

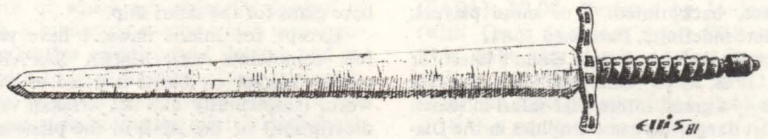
MARINAGUA has little to recommend it over past G1 adventures (and nothing over recent *Traveller* adventures by other companies). For completists only.

– William A. Barton

MASTER OF THE AMULETS (Metagaming); $3.95. Designed by Mike Monastero. Adventure for *Melee/Wizard*. One 32-page rulebook, 8¾" x 12" map, a die, and one 4" x 7" sheet of counters. Boxed. One to six players; playing time 2-4 hours. Published 1981.

MASTER OF THE AMULETS is a *Melee/Wizard* adventure set in Dirringar's Valley, where a magical catastrophe left the magical devices of the title lying about for gated-in adventurers to find and use on adventures in the valley. Rules for overland travel, random encounters and amulet generation are included.

The physical quality of MOTA is not bad: The counters, about half of which are markers for the amulets, are somewhat crudely drawn but perfectly usable. The map is done in a two-color scheme and bears a pleasant resemblance to the maps in Tolkien's books.



Unfortunately, this is not much of an adventure. It is very little more than "travel, encounter monsters, find amulets, and escape from the valley." There are no programmed paragraphs, and the "Local Inhabitants" that were included for color are just another encounter. To make matters worse, they are obviously not in the right locations; two of the locations are not even on the map!

If MOTA had come out before ITL and the advanced rules modules, this game would have been state-of-the-art adventure technology. As it stands, this Microquest could only be fully appreciated by a *Wizard/Melee* player who never intends to buy ITL for the overland travel and encounter rules. Even then, the player won't be getting the "official" ITL:TFT rules on these subjects; Metagaming includes a note asking how TFT players feel about the inclusion of these variant systems. If such inclusion means getting less of an adventure, I'd say "Heck No!"

For all of its faults, I'd still recommend MASTER OF THE AMULETS to players of *Melee* and *Wizard* who want to try an overland adventure but can't spring the money for TFT.

– Stefan Jones

SEA OF MYSTERY (Flying Buffalo, Inc.); $4.95. Written by G. Arthur Rahman. Solo adventure for *Tunnels & Trolls*. One player; playing time indefinite. Published 1981.

SEA OF MYSTERY is a *Tunnels & Trolls* solo dungeon which has an open-ended structure. Rather than going through a preconstructed labyrinth, you have encounters on the high seas, including pirates, slave galleys, storms, and the rest. The sequence of the adventure is not fixed; a die roll is often used to determine the course of events.

This format is much nicer, I feel, because in many of the other solo dungeons I have had one character manage to get 90% through the adventure, only to be killed by a tough encounter at the end. Then I send in another character, since it would be nice to discover how it all turns out, but the second guy knows what to do in 90% of the situations! Premonition will take much longer to develop in SEA OF MYSTERY.

The situations are quite varied. I found one or two a bit hard to swallow, and some seemed contrived. However, it is basically a good, solid adventure with a welcome change in format from most other Flying Buffalo solo dungeons. I recommend it.

– Russ Williams

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FANTASY GAMES

SIMBA SAFARI (Judges Guild); $5.98. Designed by Dave Sering. Approved for *Traveller.* 8½" x 11" 32-page book, 17" x 32" map/plans sheet, backprinted. 2 or more players; playing time indefinite. Published 1981.

SIMBA SAFARI is Judges Guild's latest for *Traveller.* It is, as its name implies, a hunting adventure – a grand interstellar safari in search of the most dangerous game trophies in the Diamond-Prince subsector of JG's Ley Sector. A group of hunters and the crew of the hunting ship *Simba Safari* pit their skills – and their lives – against creatures such as the Tilmar's Kraken, sand spiders, scorpoids, fiftypedes, hexabears, scream squirrels, and skysnakes. The adventure is complete with statistics and 15mm scale deck plans for the safari ship, pregenerated characters, descriptions of the various activities and trophy beasts of each world, planetary event and encounter tables, 15mm scale plans and descriptions of an alien base, and artifact and ruin tables. There are also a few scenario suggestions besides those obvious ones that would evolve from hunting situations and character interactions. And, along with the 15mm plans, the separate map sheet includes planetary maps of the *Simba Safari*'s stops.

SIMBA SAFARI proves a quite interesting departure from the regular type of *Traveller* adventure, particularly those JG has been releasing lately. The hunting angle is a nice switch from shipboard attacks and invasion, planetary infiltrations and mucking about through "mysterious installations" (except for the alien base part). The characters are well-drawn for intriguing role-playing situations and, with a couple of exceptions, are not so heavily armed that they can blow away everything in sight with no danger to themselves. Several of the animals are well-conceived – even though the names of a couple sound like they were cribbed from a D&D module. And it's nice to (at last) have plans for the safari ship.

Except for minor flaws, I have relatively few complaints with SIMBA SAFARI. The trophy animal on Bastis is listed as the sandworm (suspiciously like the Arrakan variety in description) or the slink in the planetary stop section; yet the closest thing described to either of these in the animal section is the 25kg slinker – which hardly fills the bill. Also, I believe the slipping in of yet another abandoned alien base is quite unnecessary in this sort of adventure. (Is anyone else getting just a little tired of abandoned alien bases popping up *everywhere* a group of players land? The things must be going for a dime a dozen in the local Imperial Sears catalog!)

All in all, however, in the hands of the right group of players, this could easily prove the best *Traveller* adventure JG has published in some time.

–William A. Barton

TARLKIN'S LANDING (Judges Guild); $6.98. Designed by Dave Sering. One 8½" x 11" 46-page guidebook, 22" x 34" map, backprinted. Published 1981.

TARLKIN'S LANDING is the first in Judges Guild's series of "universal SF role-playing aids." Surprisingly, the term "universal SF supplement doesn't necessarily mean, in this case, "for *Traveller.*" In fact, the supplement would seem easier to use with other systems, such as *Star Patrol.* NPC stats are based on a 3d6 roll and include such non-*Traveller* characteristics as Charisma, Constitution, Luck, Leadership, Psionics, and Agility (the last obviously from *Space Opera*). The map is a big black-and-white representation of the city on a hex map taking half of one side, with large 15mm-scale building plans printed on a staggered square grid (similar to the battle board in Chaosium's *Basic Role Playing*) covering the other half and the back. The guidebook contains two maps of the general area around the city, a planetary map, descriptions of major buildings, NPC stats, and a center pull-out portion of smaller buildings for miniatures use. There are also a conversion scale for transferring the 3d6 NPC stats to 2d6 for *Traveller* and d100 for *Space Opera,* rumor lists, and encounter tables.

TARLKIN'S LANDING could prove quite useful if you need a starport city in a pinch. Some of the characters and situations can be very interesting – especially in a run-in with "the law" in the form of Krgghkk'a, a 2.5m fanged alien described as a cross between a gorilla and a tyrannosaurus.

On the other hand, difficulties are going to arise no matter what system you use, except perhaps *Star Patrol.* A lot of conversions are going to be necessary with *Traveller, Space Opera,* and others. The staggered-row square grid might as well have been a hex grid; that's the type of movement it best approximates. Side and diagonal movement, as in *Snapshot,* are almost impossible. The graphics are uninspired at best, one even being recycled from the *Traveller Logbook.*

TARLKIN'S LANDING is, unfortunately, one of those "universal" supplements that doesn't quite fit any system. Still, if the conversion problems, the price, and other liabilities don't bother you, you probably will find Tarlkin's Port O' Call of some use.

–William A. Barton

TRIAL BY FIRE (Judges Guild); $4.00. Designed by Mike Wilson. Approved for AD&D. One 8½" x 11" 32-page book. 2 or more players; playing time indefinite. Published 1981.

TRIAL BY FIRE is an introductory adventure for AD&D. The adventure presented is classic D&D: A group of adventurers bravely go down into an underground world of monsters, magic and treasure. Included with each room description are pertinent rules from AD&D for handling the situation presented.

Perhaps the best part of this adventure is that the more obscure rules and monster stats for each situation are found with the room descriptions, saving time for the DM. In a few cases where the necessary rules are too long for inclusion, the DM is referred to a page in the appropriate rulebook.

There are a few omissions of rules and stats, but nothing a competent DM can't deal with. The biggest problem with the adventure is the adventure itself. Used as an introduction, it will give new players the impression that all AD&D consists of gilded holes, full of monsters waiting to be slain and lairs waiting to be looted. The background for the adventure is sketchy; the rationale is weak. Typical of bad D&D, big, predatory monsters live in rooms within a hundred feet of each other and more roam the halls in between.

TRIAL BY FIRE would be a fair adventure for the first-time DM, as it allows easy access to the more obscure rules. More experienced players and DMs are likely to be dissatisfied with the weak logic behind the scenario.

– J. David George

URAGYAD'N OF THE SEVEN PILLARS (FASA); $6.00. Designed by William H. Keith, Jr., and J. Andrew Keith. Approved for *Traveller.* 6" x 9" 46-page booklet and 11" x 17" backprinted map. 2-7 players; playing time indefinite. Published 1981.

Set on the planet Vahjdi in the Far Frontiers sector, a tidal-locked planet with a small habitable stretch of desert land, this adventure centers on the attempts of a small group of hired mercenaries to lead the planet's low-tech native tribes in a rebellion against the higher-tech invaders from a nearby world. A victory for the poorly-organized native nomad N'raqah against the Talaki invaders and their elite Grey Death Legion is the adventurers' only chance to get off the planet alive. The adventure outlines the conditions on the planet, describes the N'raqah nomads, provides referee guidelines on running the Talaki military groups, gives pregenerated player-characters, and suggests targets for nomad raids.

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URAGYAD'N is a fascinating *Traveller* adventure for several reasons. In addition to leading a successful rebellion against superior technology, the players must act as diplomats to unite the quarreling tribes against the invaders. Careful tactical planning is important. A side question is the mystery of how the Tech 6 Talaki managed to develop space travel and why they bothered to conquer their hostile neighboring world. A special system for resolving large-scale battles and a section on integrating the new *Striker* miniatures rules into the adventure are added pluses.

Aside from a number of typos, there are few flaws in this adventure. The only serious oversight is the omission of the heads to three columns of morale DMs on page 30. A phone conversation with Jordan Weisman of FASA revealed that the columns should be headed, in order: *Talaki, Grey Death Legions, N'raqah.* Each column then gives the DMs that will affect the morale of that particular group in battle.

Overall, URAGYAD'N OF THE SEVEN PILLARS is an excellent offering that should provide hours of entertainment and adventure to *Traveller* players. I recommend it highly.

–William A. Barton

WASPWINTER (Judges Guild); $5.95. Written by Walter & Dorothy Bledsoe. Supplement for *Traveller.* 32 page 8½" x 11" guide book, 22" x 17" map of planet. 2 or more players; playing time indefinite. Published 1981.

Waspwinter is a habitable planet which is being used as a slave labor colony by a band of alien space pirates seeking to overthrow the government of their home world. The characters are the crew of a Free Trader which has misjumped into the system and must battle the pirates and their multi-species slaves to return to the stars.

This adventure introduces six new minor races, five of which are under the control of the sixth, a humanoid species which uses somewhat ineffective mind-control devices and religious faith to keep its thralls from getting uppity. City and base maps are provided for five of these races, including the pirate's stronghold, which is situated in an extinct volcano. Wildlife and event tables for the planets are also included.

One of the most interesting features of WASPWINTER is the inclusion of full personality-and-history descriptions for each of the six pre-generated characters; this is a great help in encouraging role-playing.

Unfortunately, the designers abandon the characters right after they encounter the pirates; once the adventurers have reached the "special rest camp," no ideas are given as to further action. Some of the alien slave-races are ripe for revolt, but how do the players reach them? How do the slaves react to each other and strangers? More details on the overall operation of the pirate's slaving operation would have been helpful.

Physical quality of WASPWINTER is fair; the artwork ranges from fair to awful; layout and editing are good, certainly an improvement over some of the earlier JG adventures. The planetary map is big and nicely done, but a smaller map in the rulebook would have been just as useful, not to mention cheaper.

WASPWINTER is an excellent adventure for refs who don't mind having to fill out the details of the adventures they buy. Those who want a ready-to-play situation are warned to try something else.

– Stefan Jones

PLAY AIDS

ADVENTURE CLASS SHIPS, VOL. I (FASA); $9.00. Designed by Jordan Weisman (with Craig Johnson, Scott Walschlager and Ross Babcock). Approved for *Traveller.* One 5½" x 8½" 16-page booklet, five 17" x 22" deck plan sheets, backprinted. Published 1981.

FASA continues in its series of 15mm scale deck plans with sheets for ten different Imperial, Zhodani and independent vessels, with an accompanying identification booklet of ship stats and descriptions, plus smaller scale plans of four auxiliary vessels. Along with the deck plans, and side and top views of the ships, each plan sheet includes an illustration by William H. Keith, Jr. The set comes in an illustrated light cardstock sleeve instead of the plastic bag of earlier FASA plans.

The ships and plans of ADVENTURE CLASS SHIPS are far superior to even the best of FASA's earlier plan sets in both concept and production. All lines are solidly printed, areas are clearly labeled and details readily visible. The ID booklet is much nicer than those with earlier sets, too. All the ships in the set should prove useful in *Traveller* play, especially the new Zhodani vessels, now that the Fifth Frontier War is in full swing.

What few problems can be found are minor. Several typos crept into the booklet, but nothing that can't be readily deciphered. And the combination wardrobe-sanitary closets on the few Babcock plan sheets (as opposed to the heads on the Weisman plans) still appear too small for the stated purpose.

Overall, ADVENTURE CLASS SHIPS, VOL. I proves an excellent play aid for *Traveller* and is recommended fully.

– William A. Barton

StarMaster

Air screams around your ships as they enter the atmosphere. Missile-launchers fire deafeningly to port and starboard while atmosphere-fighters drop in shrieking dives from their hangers below. Warriors, tightly clenching their weapons, check their pressure suits one last time and climb in grim silence into their landing shuttles. In the distance five more heavy cruisers of your empire are firing and unloading their cargo, their hulls gleaming crimson in the light of the red sun above.

This is not a drill. Already laser and missile fire from the mile-wide guardian fortresses below have turned the sky into an exploding nightmare of smoke, fire, and fragmented metal. Planes and shuttles twist and dodge down towards a landscape rapidly becoming an inferno of flame and radiation.

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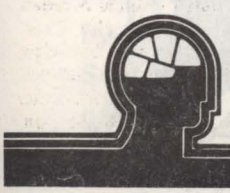

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StarMaster is a correspondence game of galactic exploration, diplomacy, and conquest allowing for interaction not only between each player and the worlds of the galaxy, but between the players themselves.

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As the chosen ruler of your people, you must decide what diplomatic and military policies will be followed in order to lead your kind to dominance among the sentient beings of the galaxy.

The galaxies of StarMaster are a complete fantasy environment of solar systems, with geographies ranging from worlds near absolute zero to worlds where rivers of molten tungsten bubble, with technologies spanning from rock-throwing cave-dwellers to advanced Elder races with near-godlike abilities.

Nor is the StarMaster environment limited in terms of playing area. There are multiple galaxies allowing for extra-galactic invasions across the voids. There are both natural and constructed gateways to (and from!) other dimensions and parallel universes.

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StarMaster offers these features:

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- Technology increases steadily, permitting faster, larger ships, deadlier weapons, and scientific breakthroughs.

The galaxies are dotted with the ruins of Elder civilizations lacking the strength to master the stars. Can you lead your world to greatness where so many others fell short?

StarMaster may be entered for $12.00 which includes the first two turns, set up turn, a rule book and all necessary material (except return postage). Thereafter, turns are $3.50 each. A rule book may be purchased separately for $3.50.

CHARACTER ROLE PLAYING (Ragnarok Enterprises); $2.00. Designed by David F. Nalle. One 8½" x 5½" 10-page booklet. Published 1981.

Designated "Mini-System 2," CHARACTER ROLE PLAYING is the second in a planned series of game aids from this company. It is a quickie course in creatively role playing the most common fantasy character types. The idea is to invent a character's personality and background, use the persona as a guide to the character's motives and behavior, and give the character a defined place in the fantasy world. No tables, charts, or statistics; this game aid is truly applicable to any game, and useable by player or gamemaster.

CHARACTER ROLE PLAYING is well-written, deserving an "A" for composition and style. The author fully conveys his concept of player-characters as living entities rather than mere collections of dice rolls.

CHARACTER ROLE PLAYING would make a dandy series of articles, or a worthwhile section in a rulebook, but is too limited to stand on its own. Though the small print allows a lot of information per page, it is difficult to read and doesn't make up for the fact that you're paying $2.00 for only 10 pages.

Experienced role players don't need CHARACTER ROLE PLAYING, others won't buy it. Get it for new FRPG players (who don't yet worship the dice), if you can convince them to read and heed.

– Ronald Pehr

DUNGEON FLOORS (Heritage USA); $4.99. Nine cardboard sheets, uncut, in 4" x 7" cardboard box, 7" x 12" instruction sheet. Published 1981.

Like other such products, this is a set of cards which can be cut up to provide wood and stone floors, stairways, etc., for your miniatures to "adventure" on. Though printed on a lighter stock than some competing products, these are nicely done, in realistic full color. Depending on how small you cut them, you could get over 100 separate tiles out of this one set.

These are as nice as any such product I've yet seen. The painting detail, especially, is good. I looked in vain for an artist's credit, but, whoever he is, I hope Heritage uses him again. And the folding chairs and benches are excellent!

I question the need to package the tiles in an expensive, full-color cardboard box along with a set of "instructions." The box won't last long, and really . . . who needs more instructions than "cut them out and play with them?" Not you or I, I hope. The box is certainly pretty, but this marketing decision probably added an unnecessary $1.50 or $2 to the cost.

On the whole though – if you like such things, the DUNGEON FLOORS ought to please you greatly.

– Steve Jackson

GAMEMASTER'S SHIELD AND REFERENCE TABLES (Timeline); $5.00. Play aid for *The Morrow Project.* One 11" x 24" shield, three 8½" x 11" pages of tables, backprinted, bagged. Published 1981.

Timeline has redesigned their original Gamemaster's shield for *The Morrow Project,* adding three-hole punched reference pages and a bit of artwork to make the shield more useful to *Morrow* GMs. Much of the material of the original shield is now found on separate reference tables rather than on the shield itself; this includes the extended weapons list adding such non-*Morrow* weaponry as muskets, M1 Garands, BARs, and Schmeisser and Thompson SMGs. The reference sheets also include tables of radiation effects, bio-warfare agents, movement rates, medical and damage tables, combat tables, explosives and grenade effects, E-factors for various cartridges, and armor classes. The shield itself contains, on the GM side, tables for various types of damage, to-hit tables and modifiers, armor class table, an action/movement table and the table of PC/NPC relations. On the players side, flanking a striking painting of several Morrow vehicles emerging from a mushroom cloud, are silhouettes of the differ ent vehicles and many of the Project's small arms to aid player identification.

The new MP shield and tables are much superior both in appearance and utility to the original. Use of the separate tables, which can be kept in a GM notebook with other *Morrow* materials, alleviates the need to cram everything onto the shield itself, yet allows the extra information to be readily available.

The only problem evident with the GM shield is the careless spelling and grammatical errors throughout ("their" for "there," and so on) – even the word "shield" is misspelled (twice!) on the cover sheet. The small printing on the reference pages has caused ink to collect in some letters, obscuring them slightly.

Even with such errors, GAMEMASTER'S SHIELD AND REFERENCE PAGES succeed admirably in their function – to facilitate play in an excellent role-playing game.

– William A. Barton

STAR PATROL MISSION MASTER PACK (Terra Games Company); $5.00. Approved for *Star Patrol.* Forty 8½" x 11" sheets, errata, cut-out characters, bagged. Published 1981.

Rather than providing a GM (or MM) shield as might be expected, the MISSION MASTER PACK instead includes three 8½" x 11" cardstock reference sheets printed front and back primarily with the various combat tables from the game – modifiers, hit tables, miss locations, ranged, contact and explosive weapons table, armor and shielding tables and radiation levels. Also included on the charts are the success probability table, observation table and modifiers, alien attitude table and NPC loyalty table. The PACK contains six character sheets and six star chart sheets, plus six small-hex sheets and six square-grid sheets for mapping. The one-page scenario included is obviously derived from A. E. Van Vogt's *Voyage of the Space Beagle,* the same as used for the movie *Alien.* The packs being sold by Gamescience also include one of the cardstock cut-out character sheets from the first run of *Star Patrol,* the poorly printed one with the dull, runny colors, later replaced by better printed versions in the game itself. (Note: According to Lou Zocchi, anyone whose copy of the *Star Patrol* game contained the poorly printed sheet may get one of the better versions free by writting Gamescience.)

The combat tables are probably the most useful part of the MISSION MASTER PACK. Their use will eliminate a lot of page turning to find the tables in the rule book. A few of the tables could easily be used with other SF games (*Traveller* for one) that lack hit location tables, etc. The errata sheet is helpful, too.

The main problem with the PACK is its overall utility compared to the price. The character and star chart sheets could easily be photocopied from the game book. Hex and square grid sheets are easily obtainable. The scenario isn't all that useful. So the $5 is mainly for the reference sheets and the errata.

If you're a *Star Patrol* Mission Master, however, and the price doesn't deter you, you might still find the MISSION MASTER PACK a useful purchase.

– William A. Barton

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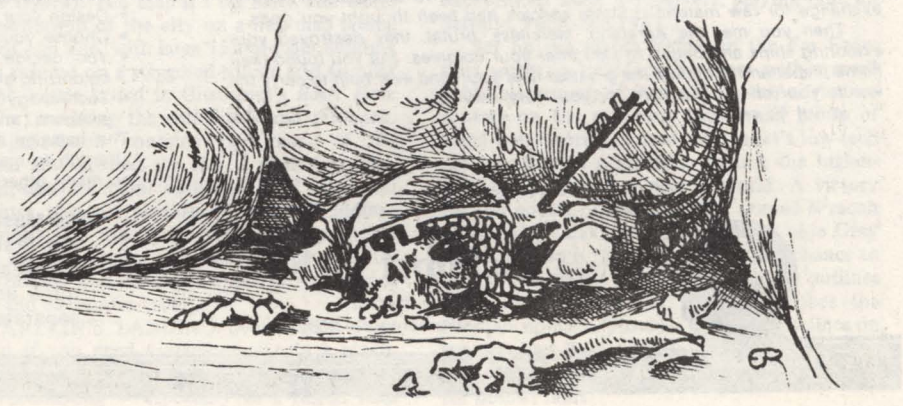


MINIATURES

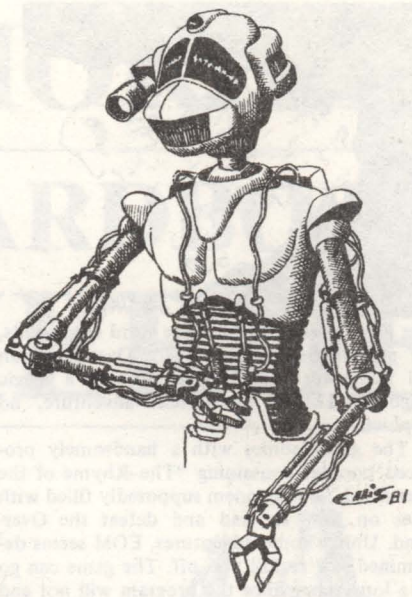
SPACE OPERA MINIATURES (FGU); $4.00/set. Designed by Bob Charrette. Ten 15mm figures per pack. Released 1982.

As part of its continuing series of expansions and supplements for its *Space Opera* SF role-playing system, FGU is releasing SPACE OPERA MINIATURES in 15mm scale. Each set includes 10 different 15mm figures for use with SO as player characters or NPCs. Initial releases are a set of Human Adventurers, featuring 10 assorted human figures, and a set of Alien Adventurers, including two different figures from each of the five major alien races in SO, such as the ursoids, saurians, mekpurrs and rauwolfs. Later releases will include figures in battle and powered armor, packs of figures from each alien race, the NPC "bug-eyed monster" races and fauna packs for specific worlds in the SO universe.

Overall, the FGU figures are quite nice. They compare quite favorably to the Martian Metals *Traveller* figures and are even superior in some ways; far fewer figures are cast in the spread-eagle position. Ral Partha's 15mm SF figures are better cast, but lack the variety of these SO figures. I especially like the saurian figures – like miniature Tyrannosauri with weapons and equipment.

The only problem I could find with these figures was that a couple had some excess slag on the bases, requiring filing down before they would stand straight. Generally, the SPACE OPERA MINIATURES are well-cast and quite suitable for role-playing use, either with *Space Opera* or mixed (for variety) with figures from other lines for *Traveller, Star Patrol, Universe,* or any other SF RPG or miniature system.

– *William A. Barton*



COMPUTER GAMES

ADVENTURE IN TIME (Phoenix Software, Inc.); $29.95. Written in machine language for the Apple. One player; playing time many hours. Published 1981.

ADVENTURE IN TIME is a typical "adventure" game. It consists entirely of text descriptions of the current situations without graphics. Actions are taken by inputting two-word commands (such as "Get Manual" or "Go North"). A few of the commands are provided by the instructions, but most must be deduced as the game goes on. The game allegedly involves a journey through various time periods in search of a notorious criminal who has stolen a master code needed to save the human race.

The game's strong points are few. The program does work. There is provision for saving a game in progress (a necessity, considering the number of times a player will die before succeeding in the quest) and the puzzle seems to be a fair one.

The game lacks atmosphere. We are told that we are adventuring in time but the various time periods all seem very much the same. In addition, there is usually only one correct action or sequence of actions to take. If you can't figure out what to do, you can only sit back and think. Furthermore, many of the correct actions are not logical (except in a twisted and silly sort of way). It is all but impossible for even the cleverest player to solve the puzzle without being killed (or committing suicide) at least once. This might be necessary to insure that the game doesn't lose freshness too quickly, but I would prefer a more sensible method of achieving the goal.

Although the game does provide a little fun, there are many better games on the market. Your money would be better spent on one of them.

– *Rudy Kraft*

CROWN OF ARTHAIN (Microlab, 2310 Skokie Valley Road, Highland Park, IL 60035); $35. 48K disk by Dan & Marilyn Meller for the Apple II. 1 or 2 players; playing time 30-60 minutes. Cannot be saved. Published 1981.

This game, the documentation states, is designed to address the need for two-player fantasy games. The board, a hex map drawn in hi-res graphics with features such as rivers, forests, and a mountain range down the middle, is home for two princes searching for their father's crown. To win the crown, the players

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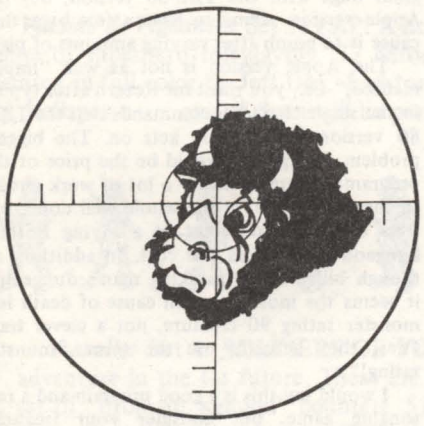

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first find the location of and password into the dungeon, then traverse the rooms and corridors within. Monsters are killed; gold and magic items are accumulated.

This game really looks good upon first, and even second, glance. The map is done fairly well, and the combat with monsters is done via very cute animation – your warrior raises his shield or thrusts his sword at the various things attacking him. The game is very well balanced between opponents; there is an option to speed up monsters for the more experienced adventurer. There is also an option for solo play.

The flaws become obvious during serious play. Combat is a farce – "hack" and "thrust" seem to do the same damage, and one costs more fatigue than the other. Success in a combat round seems to be determined by whether a key is pressed at a certain time. There are only five monster types. Fighting is tedious, especially when nine foes pile on you in a single turn (as happens with alarming frequency). Defeating nine yields no more loot than slaughtering one. Not only that, but as the same keys are used for both players' movement and combat, there's a good amount of jumping back and forth.

CROWN OF ARTHAIN would have made a fair two-player game if the monster frequency was reduced drastically. Also, the price is a tad high. As a one-player game it has nothing to recommend it. I recommend it as-is only to rich gamers who'll buy anything.

–John Morrison

EMPIRE OF THE OVERMIND (Avalon Hill); $35.00. Program available on tape for TRS-80, Apple, and Atari, and on diskette for TRS-80 and Apple. One player; playing time several hours. Cannot be saved. Published 1981.

This game is a more-or-less standard adventure game. Using two or three word commands, the player tries to destroy the Over-Mind, an evil computer that has taken over a magic kingdom. This is an all-text adventure, no graphics.

The game comes with a handsomely produced booklet containing "The Rhyme of the Over-Mind," a long poem supposedly filled with clues on how to find and defeat the Over-Mind. Unlike some adventures, EOM seems determined *not* to kill you off. The game can go on a long time, since the program will not end the game just because you are in a hopeless situation.

Despite this, the program is so poorly conceived that it is difficult to believe that a company with AH's reputation would publish it. The screen format is poor, the vocabulary of the program is extremely small, the adventure seem designed to throw you into situations that are impossible to escape except by exiting the adventure, and the speed of the program is nothing short of atrocious.

For the price of this primitive program, one could buy two-and-a-half Scott Adams all-text adventures or one full-color graphics adventure from On-Line. Not recommended.

– Bill Seligman

MICROSOFT ADVENTURE (IBM); $30. 32K diskette for the IBM, by Gordon Letwin. One player; playing time several hours. Can be saved. Published 1981.

Perhaps the single most significant thing about this release is that IBM considered the game market important enough to issue a game as part of the initial software release for its Personal Computer. The game itself is not a new game but a new packaging of the "original MIT version" of *Adventure*.

Adventure is a game of cave exploration and treasure gathering. Combat is rudimentary – the game is *not* about killing monsters. There are no graphics, all output is text. The player enters one- or two-word commands to direct the computer to move and manipulate objects. Points are awarded for areas explored and for treasure acquired. Ratings, based on points, go from "Rank Amateur" to "Grand Master" in nine categories.

No game that exists on several different computers can fully demonstrate the potential of any one computer. Even so, your thirty dollars buys many hours of cave exploring and treasure snatching. There is only one "set-up" but that one is rich and complex enough to keep anyone busy for many games. I suspect that many people will come back to this one after some flashier games have been permanently set aside.

– Carrington Dixon

STONE OF SISYPHUS (Adventure International); $35. Disk for 48K TRS-80 and Apple II. One player; playing time indefinite. Can be saved. Published 1981.

THE STONE OF SISYPHUS is based on *Tunnels & Trolls*. Anyone familiar with the solo dungeons will be very familiar with this game.

There are some good spots. It uses the computer to advantage in allowing what were referred to as "maverick options" in a *Sorcerer's Apprentice* article; rather than picking one of the standard options, you can input your own. It has a scoring feature to keep track of "death statistics" for the dungeon and who has gotten out with the most loot. I have found no program bugs with the TRS-80 version, but the Apple version seems to have a few bugs that cause it to bomb after varying amounts of play.

The Apple version is not as well "implemented," i.e., you must hit Return after typing in the single character commands that the TRS-80 version immediately acts on. The biggest problem, I suppose, would be the price of the programs. There is clearly a lot of work put into them, and it is on the whole well done, but it is basically equivalent to a Flying Buffalo dungeon at 6 times the cost. In addition, although billed as a "thinking man's dungeon," it seems the most common cause of death is a monster rating 90 creature, not a clever trap. (Yes, they actually use the term, "monster rating!")

I would say this is a good program and a reasonable game, but consider your financial situation before getting it.

– Russ Williams

PLAY BY MAIL

CYBORG (Integral Games, POB 13562, Arlington, TX 76013); $2.75/turn, $1/rulebook. Designed by Neil Patrick Moore. Play-by-mail, hand moderated, mailing envelope provided. Two week turn-around; multi-player. Begun 1981.

Once again, beyond the holocaust! In CYBORG, players are computer complexes picking up the pieces two hundred years after a *very bad* war. Players start with practically no

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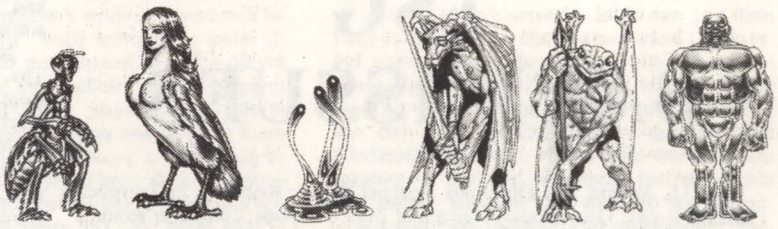

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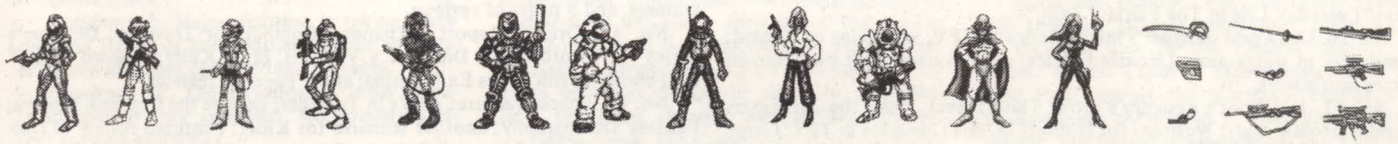

Traveller Set 1: SOLDIERS OF FORTURE. Our first licensed set of Heroes for ***Traveller***, GDW's game of science fiction adventure in the far future. These are the player characters, patrons, and other NPCs for all your adventures . . . as well as a set of "dropped weapon" counters. 57 full-color figures (plus 45 weapons), painted by Paul Jaquays. These figures are in 15 mm scale, to fit deck plans by GDW and its approved publishers. (Look for more ***Traveller*** sets soon!)

Each set is $3.00 at your hobby shop. If you can't find them locally, you can order by mail from SJ Games, at $3.00 per set PLUS 50 cents per set postage and handling. (Note: subscribers to TSG or F&M can order from us without the postage fee.) Other sets available are Fantasy Set 1 (Player Characters), Fantasy Set 2 (Brigands, Orcs, and Goblins), Fantasy Set 3 (Half-Orcs, Reptile Men, and Kobolds), and Fantasy Set 4 (Animals) – all in full color.

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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rules and the data provided by a single camera, and slowly build up (by "linking" with buildings and vehicles) an army of obedient machines, some idea of local geography, and a library of rule modules. (To give you any more details would spoil your enjoyment of the game.) CYBORG is potentially endless, as players build and enlarge their territorial domains. Orders are written in code on the turnsheet provided. Results are handwritten (in beautiful script) and sent on the backside of the next turn's turnsheet.

There is a lot of enjoyment to this game. At first, you're just trying to figure out what's going on. (What is this building? How much power will it take to energize this vehicle?) Then you progress to setting up a safe base and exploring the countryside. When you run into a hostile neighbor, the game shifts in feel again – suddenly you are desperate for something (anything!) that can fight! It is a fun, tense learning process. Integral Games is doing an excellent job of getting turns back *exactly* two weeks apart and has issued second edition rules covering some holes in the original rules. There is also an element of forgiveness when players goof up their orders, since the game is run by human moderators.

I had one problem, and a few complaints. First, there were processing errors. I had consistent problems obtaining level-of-repair reports on vehicles, and had one case of a dead unit coming back to life. Second – this is a warning to prospective players – you have to be organized. Players largely keep track of what they own (no updates are provided), and must find a way to file the mountain of new rule segments which are printed on tiny slips of paper. Third, the rules are in places unclear – particularly movement and order sequencing. Lastly, it seems cumbersome to have to give units two orders (power and instruction) to get them to do anything.

I recommend CYBORG as a good game with these provisions: (1) be prepared to spend time keeping track of what you own and what you know, and (2) expect an error occasionally.

–W.G. Armintrout

TSG BACK ISSUES

No. 15. Wizard and Olympica designer intros; Robotics in Traveller; Floating Hulks; Ogre Update; Orcs and their Weapons; computer gaming.

No. 16. WarpWar article; Classics Simulated in Melee; Alpha Omega; Demons! (Moties in Melee); 1977 game survey results – and a LOT of reviews.

No. 17. GEV designer's intro; strategy for Chitin: I; variants for Imperium, Melee, and a combination Ogre/Rivets variant; WarpWar fiction.

No. 18. IceWar designer's intro; variant scenarios for Invasion: America and War of the Ring; additional equipment for Traveller; mounted Melee; "Referee, Declare Thyself!" (role-playing GM technique).

No. 19. POND WAR; variant units and scenarios for GEV; combining Imperium and WarpWar; Battlefleet Mars variant; reviews of Swords & Sorcery, RuneQuest, and Raumkrieg; MicroGame design article.

No. 20. Olympica tactics; Psionics in Traveller; TARTARS & MARTYRS; Reality in Melee; designer's optional rules for Ice War; designer's article on Starships & Spacemen; "Rip-Off Blues" (wargaming frauds).

No. 21. Interview with Dave Arneson; running a MicroGame tournament; tactics for Ogre and GEV; spaceship miniatures; Black Hole variant rules, putting the Deryni into Melee; more reviews.

No. 22. Ice War tactics; Black Hole physics; PARTY BRAWL; 1978 SF/fantasy game survey results; Fantasy Trip short story.

No. 23. Invasion of the Air Eaters designer's article; Ogre meets Ice War; Sticks & Stones expansion; Vikings and Valde in The Fantasy Trip.

No. 24. Black Hole designer's intro; "The Psychology of Wargaming"; Naval Melee; "The Four-Howitzer Defense in Ogre;" variants for Chitin: I, The Creature that Ate Sheboygan, and John Carter of Mars.

No. 25. Stellar Conquest issue . . . designer's article, tournament tactics, and variant scenarios; also – strategy in Rivets; benefit-cost analysis for Ice War; "Everyday Life in The Fantasy Trip."

No. 26. Oneworld designer's intro; tactics in GEV; variations on Wizard; computers in wargaming; Life-sized Melee; and a variant that puts human forces into Rivets.

No. 27. Hot Spot's designer's intro; Time Travel; Nuke the Air Eaters (gaming atomic war); Weapons for Hobbits in TFT; Muskets in TFT; Game Design Part 1; 5 pages of game reviews.

No. 28. 1979 Game Survey results; Overmen in TFT; A Guide to SF/Fantasy Game Publishers; Task Force Games report; Writers' and Artists' guides; 7 pages of reviews; Game Design Part 2; Deus Ex Machina.

No. 29. Fantasy Trip designer's intro; Painting Fantasy Miniatures; Fantasy and SF game magazines surveyed; Game Design Part 3; more Deus Ex Machina; 7 pages of reviews.

No. 30. KUNG FU 2100; Painting Fantasy Miniatures Part II; Index to Game Articles; Game Design Part 4; Programmable Calculators; 10 pages of reviews.

No. 31. "Sam Beowulf"; 1980 Game Software survey; Game Design Part 5; Random Maze Generation; 9 pages of reviews.

No. 32. Traveller issue: Alternate Character Types, reviews of play aids, scenarios, and variants; also Game Design Part 6; Deus Ex Machina; "Minus Two Reaction;" software survey update; Yaquinto Games report; 9 pages of reviews.

No. 33. Play-by-mail issue: Feature reviews of four PBM games, a Warp War Campaign, Survey of PBM companies; also, Contest Report; Company Report from Schubel and Son; "End Game;" GEV scenario; Game Design Part 7; Deus Ex Machina; The Good Guys, Part I; and 10 pages of reviews.

No. 34. Miniatures issue: Cardboard Heroes Designer's Notes, LOTR Miniatures, Painting Fantasy Miniatures Advanced Techniques, Survey of miniatures manufacturers; also "The Challenge;" Artifact Designer's Notes and Expansion Rules; 3-D Displays II; Game Design Part 8; Wish Contest winner; and 8 pages of reviews.

No. 35. The 1980 Game Survey; Solitaire Ogre; Notes for Novice DMs; The War of the Worlds featured; Insane Variants on Stomp!; Character Contest results; More Psionics for Traveller; Game Design Part IX; Deus Ex Machina; and 9 pages of reviews.

No. 36. Computing damage in Star Fleet Battles; The Fire Web, Artifact for Traveller; a Featured Review of Akalabeth; Eon Products Company Report; The Ten Deadly Sins of Computer Game Programming; Computer Graphics contest winner; and 8 pages of reviews.

No. 37. Gaming the Alien; Hyborean Risk; Improved Mission Resolution for Freedom in the Galaxy; Troubles in Valetia; Cosmic Encounter Review; FGU Company Report; Winners of the Weapons Contest; Ten Deadly Sins Part II; and 6 pages of reviews.

No. 38. 1980 Game Survey Results; Designer Notes for The Lords of UnderEarth; Used ships for Traveller; Selling Your Game Article; Expert D&D and Time War reviewed; Combination Game Contest; The Complaints Department; and 7 pages of reviews.

No. 39. Computer issue: Designer's Notes on Akalabeth, Strategic Simulations Report, Strategy in the Warp Factor, Computers to Go, a TRS-80 Briefing, An update on the gaming world; also Rumor Reliability in Traveller; Scenario for Triplanetary; Magic contest results; Simple Traps; and 8 pages of reviews.

No. 40. Traveller issue: Planet of Adventure: Tschai, a new Traveller combat system, Non-Human Races contest winners, Aboard the Leviathan; also Cumulative Index to Game Articles; Game Design: RPGs; Deus Ex Machina; and 6 pages of reviews.

No. 41. D&D issue: Tips for Thieves, Alternate Races for D&D, DM Don'ts, (Your Name) and the Holy Grail; also Tips for TFT Players; more Non-humans contest winners; Game Design (last of the series); Deus Ex Machina; and 9 pages of reviews.

No. 42. Star Trek issue: Designer's Notes, Official Errata, Star Fleet Battle Manual reviewed, programming dialog in Trek computer games; also Metamorphosis Alpha Notebook; glossary of game terms – and what they really mean; combined arms in D&D; more nonhuman races; GEV contest winners; and 8 pages of reviews.

No. 43. Origins Report; Expanded Combat for Traveller; Designer's Notes for Swordthrust; Diplomacy Variants; More Killer; "Sword's Man" by Timothy Zahn; Deus Ex Machina; and 9 pages of reviews.

No. 44. Special feature: AFVs in Traveller; Beware the Uranium Dragon; Fantasy Demography; another scenario for Killer; Featured review of Universe; Deus Ex Machina; and 8 pages of reviews.

No. 45. Computer issue: Automated Simulations company report, Play-by-Phone computer gaming; also winning strategies for StarWeb; Designer's Notes for Grimtooth's Traps and Car Wars; reviews of Robot War and Nebula 19; Glossary contest results; Murphy's Rules; and 11 pages of reviews.

No. 46. Traveller issue: Terrorists in Traveller, Expanding Traveller, Traveller Supplement – Flare Star; also "The FBI Affair;" Constellation contest results; Featured Reviews of Wizardry and Fifth Frontier War; Deus Ex Machina, and 9 pages of reviews.

No. 47. D&D issue: Remedial Role-Playing, Kimberani's Tomb adventure for D&D; also, Designer's Notes for Barbarian Prince; Featured Review of Barbarian Prince; Physicians in Traveller; a Killer scenario, 1981 Game Survey; and 9 pages of reviews.

No. 48. Adventure Game Supplement: "Storm," sequel to "Flare Star;" "Symmkyn's Edge;" Look! Up in the Sky; The Balrog and the Finger of Death; Miniatures for FRP Games, Reviews of The Shattered Alliance and the 2nd Edition of High Guard; Deus Ex Machina, and 11 pages of reviews.

Send $2.50 per copy, plus 50 cents per order for postage and handling, to TSG, P.O. Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760-8957.

PBM Update

BEYOND THE STELLAR EMPIRE (Adventures By Mail)

Company News: Adventures By Mail has acquired a brand new high speed computer printer. The BSE game newspaper 3 has been published and 4 is being prepared. We are now accepting articles for our new PBM magazine entitled *The PBM Journal.* If you'd like to submit articles concerning any commercially operated PBM game on the market, we will consider them for publication.

Rule Changes: We have eliminated BSE blurbs T217 and T362. Each has been replaced by a full sized Data Sheet. Also a new Outposts Data Sheet has been released to replace the former, outdated copy.

Robert Cook

UNIVERSE III (Central Texas Computing)

Company News: CTC has finally settled into its new offices at 710 Southwest Tower in Austin. Enrollment continues to climb, and Quadrant VII should be open by the time you read this.

Game News:

Quadrant V. Terran organizations are growing stronger, several of them having arranged for trade discounts at Etuel Planets. A fleet of rogue Terrans is reported to be operating in the quadrant. It cannot be determined if the Muar are backing this group or not.

Quadrant VI. Several Etuel civilizations have been discovered by explorers. Rumor has it that another group of aliens, as yet unknown to most Terrans, exists in the farther reaches of the quadrant.

David Bolduc

UNIVERSE II (Clemens & Associates)

Company News: We have been able to assign ships to those who were on our waiting list and now have about 10 to 12 openings in each of the quadrants if any players have friends who wish to join.

Game News:

Quadrant I: Major fighting is taking place on both flanks of the Regajian Empire as several Terran alliances continue their attacks.

Quadrant II: The situation in most populated areas is very confused. No concerted effort appears underway.

Quadrant III: PAF Alliance ships are appearing in widespread areas, but no declaration of intent has been issued.

Quadrant IV: Concentrated exploration efforts continue in the Lupus area, with colonies expected soon.

Regajian Empire: The lack of threat in Quad II has enabled the Regajian Empire to transfer a strong battle group to Quad I.

Ixtli Empire: New recruits have enabled the Quad I border to be reinforced. It is speculated that the Regajians may attack once the Terrans are defeated.

Muar Empire: With Quad IV secure, the major effort will be to eliminate the Terran intruders roaming around the Muar Empire in Quad III.

Jon Clemens

WARP FORCE ONE (Emprise Game Systems)

Company News: Emprise Game Systems, which ceased operations in October of 1981, has been purchased, along with its fully computer moderated PBM space wargame *Warp Force One,* by Steve Gray. Steve hopes to complete adaptation to a new computer system and testing so as to again offer *Warp Force One* before midyear 1982. Emprise's price structure will be completely revised. While leaving the game itself unchanged, he does intend to add a player rating system and new policies such as bargains for standby and fill-in players, to facilitate more quickly forming games and keeping them filled. Steve is also considering a suggestion to change the name *Warp Force One* to something with more market appeal (a free game setup to whoever suggests the new name that is adopted). No orders or game fees are being accepted now; however, anyone wanting to suggest a new name, be notified when *Warp Force One* games begin forming or order an old WF1 rule book for 50 cents (postage and handling), while they last, should write: Emprise Game Systems, 16229 Victory Blvd. 51AB, Van Nuys, CA 91406, (213) 780-9173.

Steve Gray

THE TRIBES OF CRANE (Schubel & Son)

Company News: We are very pleased to announce that our very first player in *The Tribes of Crane* is still with us, playing actively and still enjoying the game. Thank you, Mr. Clay Kallam, for your long-time support.

We are planning a new, second generation, computer game tentatively entitled *Intrigue.*

Rule Change: Starting Feb. 1st, there is a new rule on how large trade transactions will be handled. In the past all prices in the cities were totally fixed. In the future, on all transactions over 3,000 gold, the forces of supply and demand will come into effect. The supply and demand will be determined by population. So larger transactions will be possible in large cities with less change in price. In a smaller city, the price changes will be more severe.

Game News: On Crane I the city of Gwadar fell to the forces of the Eastern AFN Army led by the veteran commander Thorodin of the Red Duck People. Thorodin used over 30 war trained mammoths in his successful attack. This is the first time mammoths have been used with such success. The Seeadler People created quite a stir in the Northern Sea. They attacked their long-time allies, the Murre People. The Murre warriors had temporarily left their nonwarriors to make a surprise raid on Dade's treasury. The Seeadler People attacked the Murre nonwarriors, but the Murre People held their ground. As the Murre warriors returned unsuccessful from their raid, they were set upon by the Seeadler People. The Murre warriors also could not be defeated. The Seeadler People are now outnumbered by the combined Murre fleets.

On Crane II, the events at Nanda continue. Lief Vladgon's Valorous Ice Army reached the city, which had been taken and plundered by the Southern Clan. He gave Brigade Commander Odrim an ultimatum to: (1) leave Nanda in Valorous hands, (2) provide the city with 5,000 gold, (3) swear allegiance to Lief Vladgon and accept him as the Valorous prophet, and (4) slay all warriors who are not sworn to Valorous. We all await Odrim's answer. In Zadar, the Sinn Fein People helped the Chatan-Grand Union relief column enter the besieged city. There was fierce fighting by many tribes all during the day. As night fell, the Dark Union held most of the city and the city's palace grounds. The Chatan-Grand Union forces hold the northern quarter of the city, the small fortress within the palace grounds and part of the harbor. It seems a third attack will be necessary to completely take the city. Wick Saal of the Celtani Federation marched toward Burgos. He anticipated an easy victory, but the city warriors and barbarians were stronger than he expected. The city held, but it used all of its resources to do so. They do not have much of a chance against a second attack.

STARMASTER (Schubel & Son)

Central Galaxy: The Cajapul and the Cinderian Truce races attempted to take over Nepal 2, the homeworld of the Dreamsingers Coalition. The attackers had defeated their naval defenses after many years of battle. After fierce fighting, the Dreamsingers were desperate. To keep the attackers from taking over their megacities, they blew up 80 of them. The Cajapuls won a shallow victory. The Valkyrian Empire attacked and destroyed the Tassui Confederation at Knaab 5. This highly advanced race seems to have it in for races in certain player "defense alliances."

Northeast Galaxy: The Northeast Galaxy will soon see players controlling Elder Races as they do now in the Central Galaxy. At Satiric 4, the Cimaron race attempted to defend itself against the Norsetam Empire who outnumbered them 6 to 1. They didn't have a chance, but fought courageously. The Kzin Empire encountered little resistance in their naval attack against the Thorin Empire at Liverick 3. On the ground, the Kzinti units were hampered by the strange terrain, gravity and temperature. Still resistance was light and the battle was soon over. The victorious Kzin Empire can now use this world for its production capabilities.

George V. Schubel

PBM Update reports on professionally-moderated play-by-mail games. Notices are monthly. Copy deadline is 60 days previous to the first of the month, for the issue in which the notice is to appear. (Deadline for the June issue is April 1.) All copy should be typed and double-spaced. Notices should not exceed 200 words in length. TSG reserves the right to edit copy as necessary.

CONTEST

After our last word-search puzzle, we got a few letters that objected to the whole idea . . . a lot that said "OK once in a while" and some that wanted to see a lot of them. Striving for the happy medium, here's one more; it will be the last for a while.

This puzzle is itself a contest winner. The contest in our December issue involved composition of such a puzzle, getting as many SF/fantasy game names as possible within a square 20 letters on a side. This puzzle contains over 60 games . . . making it far and away the winner. (As before, we're not telling exactly how many there are!)

Right now, we can't say WHO composed this puzzle . . . he (or she) neglected to include his name on either the puzzle sheet or the envelope it was in! Fortunately, there was a return address – so we ought to be able to get that 12-issue subscription to where it belongs.

The runner-up, winning a 6-issue subscription, was Gregory W. Davis, of West Bountiful, Utah.

His entry had 57 game names. (There weré a couple of entries that seemed to have more, but they were troubled by misspellings or other glitches.)

Now – the *solution* of this puzzle becomes our next contest. You should note that some game titles are computer games; that the words of multi-word titles have been run together; and that "The" has been omitted from titles that begin thusly.

The names hidden here may read up, down, right-to-left, left-to-right, or diagonally in any direction. The first person to respond with a complete list of the games (remember, there are more than 60) will win a year's subscription to TSG. (Our anonymous designer and his friends and associates are, of course, on their honor not to enter.) If nobody gets them all, the winner will be the earliest among those that find the largest number by April 25, 1982. Your entry should take the form of a LIST of game names, alphabetized if possible. Don't send us the puzzle with the names circled and make us do the counting.

A B M C A R W A R S A N S R O B D T S O
T R R G E X S K C A O R O T A I U A G D
N I U T O R A Q C E W R M E A W N R E Y
U V W I C N B O U O R P B S G R E I V S
J E Q T O A D R H A L B R U L N W C C S
W T S A H U F O A O Z R E A S A U A I E
I S O N N E T I R M T A A R W H W D R U
Z T R D A S R R T S H G R W U D I A L S
A N E T P P E O E R T K O T E S N D E R
R A S O A T S U L A A A N D I M A I O E
D D T O L I Q H I Y C I R A S M I G M L
D S A E R U N D O N M H C F L F E T A L
L I B R I C I F E T T P O I A S I L V I
Y D A R K O E R I N G R I L T L T R A K
T E K D R O Y R D N O A U C Y A L O E G
H S N E E P V E E Z I R L D A W D I M E
R K T R M M M E O R A T U S E U A E K P
I S R A U O R N R Y A D Y A M R L R L I
A I V O N O K N A T L L E H S T O B O R
C R Y S Z U J M E L E E R I F R A T S E

News & Plugs

Chaosium has published *World of Wonder!*, a role-playing system based on *Basic Role-Playing.*

Yaquinto is planning to publish a house organ, a newsletter to be distributed free to customers.

Chaosium is developing a role-playing game based on Larry Niven's *Ringworld.*

We hear that the Apple III is no longer to be considered an Edsel. The company is recalling defective machines, and replacing several of the programs for free.

Rudy Kraft is working on a further expansion for *Hellfire Warrior*, for Automated Simulations. Also: an FRP supplement called *Sunken Lands* for Midkemia.

Everybody's Doing It: Task Force Games has announced the bimonthly games magazine *Nexus*. The first issue is scheduled for April. 1-year sub: $10.00.

Lou Zocchi reports that he has won a suit brought by David Casciano. Casciano accused Zocchi of trying to ruin his reputation in the gaming industry.

Coming from SPI: *First Contact*, an aliens book for *Universe*.

Flying Buffalo is developing two role-playing games: *Web*, based on the play-by-mail game, and *Mercenaries, Spies and Private Eyes.* Also in the works: *Berserker!*, a boardgame based on the Saberhagen stories, and *Nuclear Escalation*, a companion game and expansion for the card game *Nuclear War*.

Signal has ceased publication. Rising postal rates are blamed.

Known Game Openings offers listings of multi-player PBM games. Contact: Robert Sacks, 4861 Broadway 5-V, New York, NY 10034.

Instant Software has released *Jet Fighter Pilot*, an aero-combat simulation program. Available on disk for the Apple, or tape for the TRS-80.

Creative Computing Software has acquired distribution rights to Thorn EMI's line of games for the Atari, including *Pool, Snooker, Billiards, Darts, Tilt, Dominoes* and *Cribbage.*

The Companions (245 Water St., Bath, Maine 04530) offer an interlocking system of ½" hex sheets. The first set includes fifty 8½" x 11" sheets. Price: $3.75.

SPI is developing a game based on *Conan.*

Everybody's Doing It (Part 2): *Wyrms Footnotes* has ceased publication.

Dragon's Eye is now available on 32K cassette or disk for the Atari.

Level-10 has raised the prize for finding the "Alkemstone" to $7,500.

Martian Metals will soon offer a licensed line of miniatures for *RuneQuest.*

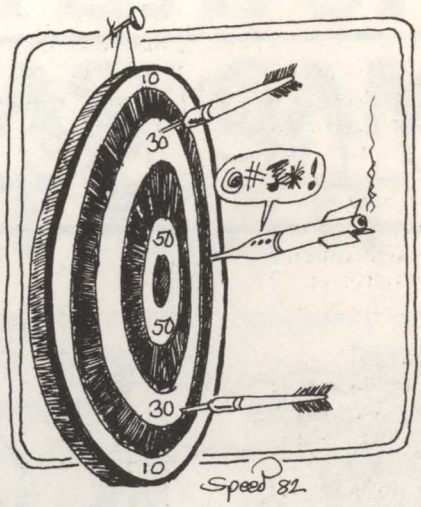
GDW has filed suit against EduWare, alleging that the computer programs *Space* and *Space II* violate GDW's *Traveller* copyrights.

Following the success of *Grimtooth's Traps*, Flying Buffalo is planning a series of "generic" play aids.

Ral Partha has announced plans to release *Laserburst*, a line of 15mm s-f miniatures.

A California State University security officer shot and wounded a student December 5 after the student allegedly pointed a 'realistic' toy gun at him. The student and a companion have denied this, saying the officer fired without warning. It appears that a "hide-and-seek" game (not using *Killer* rules) was in progress.

A reminder (from p. 34 of the *Killer* rules): "Players . . . are strongly encouraged to exercise common sense . . . This sort of activity allows any number of opportunities to get in trouble if you're not careful. If you are skulking in the bushes outside a dormitory – or if you pull a realistic-looking gun in a public building – you may have more problems than you bargained for."



Letters

When *Sword Lords* was originally reviewed in your magazine, several points were raised which deserve a rebuttal by the game's originators and designers.

Mr. Armintrout concluded a rather praiseworthy review with a series of quick indictments of the game's rules – criticisms which were virtually all explained within the space of about a dozen pages. Specifically, he wants to know what constitutes blocking terrain for ranged fire (refer to page 11, "Shooting Past Obstacles"); how scaling ladders work ("Moving Onto Objects," page 19, and on the Quick Sheet regarding Towers); and why there are 5 types of castle terrain (being stairs, walkways, sheer walls and gates).

Other questions Mr. Armintrout raises concern hit points (explained on page 18 as an option for large monsters only); what happens to dead units (covered under "Combat Effects" on Quick Sheet and on pages 10 and 11 under "Eliminated Units," on page 12, "Throwing Bodies Into Water," and on page 20 under Movement – "Leaping Bodies"); also he wonders if there is a time limit for healing (page 26 "Winning A Game"); how much a wizard can levitate (page 13, "Common Characteristics" – his value in megahexes); how do you "see" with a conceal spell (on page 13 – the caster of a spell will detect interference if cast on an invisible object); and insists that forest fire rules are left out (they're on page 20, "Movement Into Fires," and more on page 22).

In addition, he complains that the game is only a list of 'suggestions' for scenarios when in reality the Quick Sheet contains 2 complete games and 6 suggested variations plus 12 scenarios and a series of Adventure Charts which generate complete encounters in themselves.

The final criticism concerning the game's scale is the only point on which admittedly there is some basis, because any game which attempts to play as a board game as well as being compatible with any miniatures has a large range of scales to cover. The hexes are sufficiently large for 25mm figures (and the trend is toward smaller bases and figures), and is ideal for 15mm units in large formations. The benefit with this scale is the ability to fight man-to-man, instead of with counters representing 10, 100, or more men. This allows the role player to have his whole band involved individually. However, when Mr. Armintrout gives us the line that the rules "only briefly cover miniatures" we are tipped to the fact that he didn't do his homework, because miniatures are discussed on page 3 and further on pages 7, 8, and 9, where 55 common miniatures are listed, along with their values and special gaming notes. Additional notes on miniatures are sprinkled throughout concerning miniatures rangefinding, terrain construction, and wooden bases. Finally, in questioning the size of the castles on the board, Mr. Armintrout seems to ignore the background material which describes them as "2 outposts," certainly small stone keeps, and not the Camelot of his imagination.

All in all, valid criticisms of a game system are one thing, but to level a critical barrage without fulfilling the conscientious responsibility of a reviewer is to discourage both creative efforts and to do damage to a game company by creating doubt in the mind of gamers who would be entertained by the product. Let's be a little more careful in the future – splitting hairs isn't my idea of enjoyable wargaming!

Michael Becker
Archive Miniatures

I've just read Archive's rebuttal to my review of *Sword Lords*, and it is an amazing display of doubletalk.

They seem to answer my rules questions by referring to the rulebook – yet they are really only telling me to look again at the same vague and ambiguous rules that caused the questions in the first place. Yes, there is a section on "shooting past obstacles" – and obstacles aren't specifically defined!

As for scenarios: if "you be a raider and I'll be a defender" is an example of a well-presented scenario, then *Sword Lords* does have 12 scenarios. But by my lights that is a suggestion only, one that the players will have to flesh out with their own ad-hoc rules.

When we are talking about 25mm miniatures, it is not only base size that matters but also the spread of arms and weapons. I'm sorry if none of my figures would fit on the map without knocking the adjacent figure over – I didn't know I had to have the "new trend" figures.

Whenever I review a game, I spend several weekends with my friends playing (or attempting to play) the game. I do this very conscientiously – I have no masochistic desire to ruin my afternoon with a poorly-designed game.

In short, I'm flabbergasted that Archive would defend their amateurishness by attacking my standards of review. I just call them as I see them – especially since, as a free-lance designer, I may want to work for those publishers myself someday!

W. G. Armintrout
Tooele, Utah

The review of our folio adventure *Flight of the Stag* in Issue 46 was very flattering indeed, and we would like to thank Mr. William Barton for his praise. A review of this nature is one of the best rewards a designer can receive.

We would like, however, to correct one small mistake that cropped up in his review. The price of each of our folio adventures is $1.50, rather than $2.00. This was a change we put into effect shortly after Mr. Barton received his review copies.

J. Andrew Keith
Marischal Adventures

I am writing in response to the home computer "Buyers Guide" which appeared in your October issue. In particular I would like to respond to Mr. Strohm's views on the Texas Instruments 99/4 home computer. It is really a shame to see such an inaccurate, out-of-date, slanted, and just generally *wrong* review in a magazine which prides itself on accurate reviews. If this review had been written in 1978, then perhaps some of the criticisms might be justifiable, but in a magazine appearing as recently as this October, not one of the statements made against the 99/4 is correct. Taking the criticisms in the order presented, I will try to provide the correct information on the subject.

Disregarding the entirely personal opinions (Grade AAA loser, etc. . .) which Mr. Strohm expresses so freely in the first paragraph, I'll move on to the more detailed errors he makes in the second paragraph. First is the statement that the 99/4 uses a 16 bit TMS 9900 series microprocessor, the most advanced available on any home computer. This statement is correct (I guess even Mr. Strohm can't bat .000) and I don't think I need to say more. Next he states that the keyboard feels like a calculator. In fact, the 99/4 is available with two keyboards – the calculator-like 99/4 and the typewriter-type 99/4A (actually as a non-typist I prefer the 99/4). The next sentence says the display is 16 lines x 32 characters per line, actually it is 24 lines x 32 characters per line. Then he states that the TI can only do low resolution graphics. Nothing could be more incorrect! The actual graphic capability of the 99/4 is 256 dots horizontally and 192 dots vertically. Graphics can occur in 16 colors and can be mixed with text with no loss of resolution (this allows for better graphics than the Apple II, which Mr. Strohm praised). Then comes the comment the "colors shift sickeningly," I have never experienced this and calls to over forty TI users and a TI factory representative have failed to turn up this complaint a single time. I can only conclude that Mr. Strohm tossed this comment in to try and justify the comments he had made earlier. Mr. Strohm goes on to say that no peripherals are available. I happen to have – disk drive, drive controller, RS232 interface, thermal printer, telephone modem, speech synthesizer, 32K memory expansion (raises total memory to 48K), and color monitor. What, may I ask, does Mr. Strohm want that TI does not have?

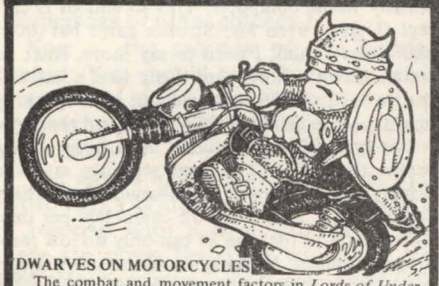
Finally comes the statement that software isn't available. Texas Instruments already supplies more software for their computer than Tandy does for Mr. Strohm's beloved TRS-80, and independent producers have now created more than 500 games for the 99/4. I, myself, own part of a company that produces several science fiction games for the 99/4 (including *Plasma Warriors* and *Anti-Missile Commander*). The rate at which the number of 99/4 programs is growing promises to soon place the TI among the leaders in software availability. Texas Instruments has certainly supplied more and better support for their machine than Tandy.

It is very evident that Mr. Strohm's review had a foregone conclusion. Despite his own admission of the TRS-80's low-resolution black and white graphics, total lack of sound effects or music capabilities and "abysmal" support by its manufacturer, Mr. Strohm names it the number one pick!

Mark C. Sumner, Editor
Users Group of St. Louis Newsletter

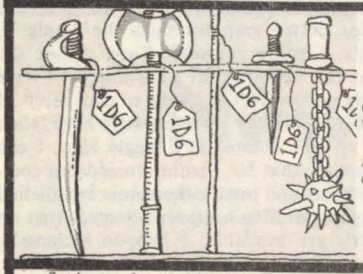
MURPHY'S RULES

STARSHIP TROOPERS IN MOSCOW
Objective Moscow, a "near future" game, includes such units as American shuttlecraft marines, cruise missile brigades and Japanese samurai divisions.
Joseph Miranda



DWARVES ON MOTORCYCLES
The combat and movement factors in *Lords of Underearth* are reversed. Taken literally, the rules would allow some units to move across the game map and back in a single turn.

GOING OUT FOR A FEW BIERS
In *Wizardry*, a dead character can join the rest of the party at the inn.



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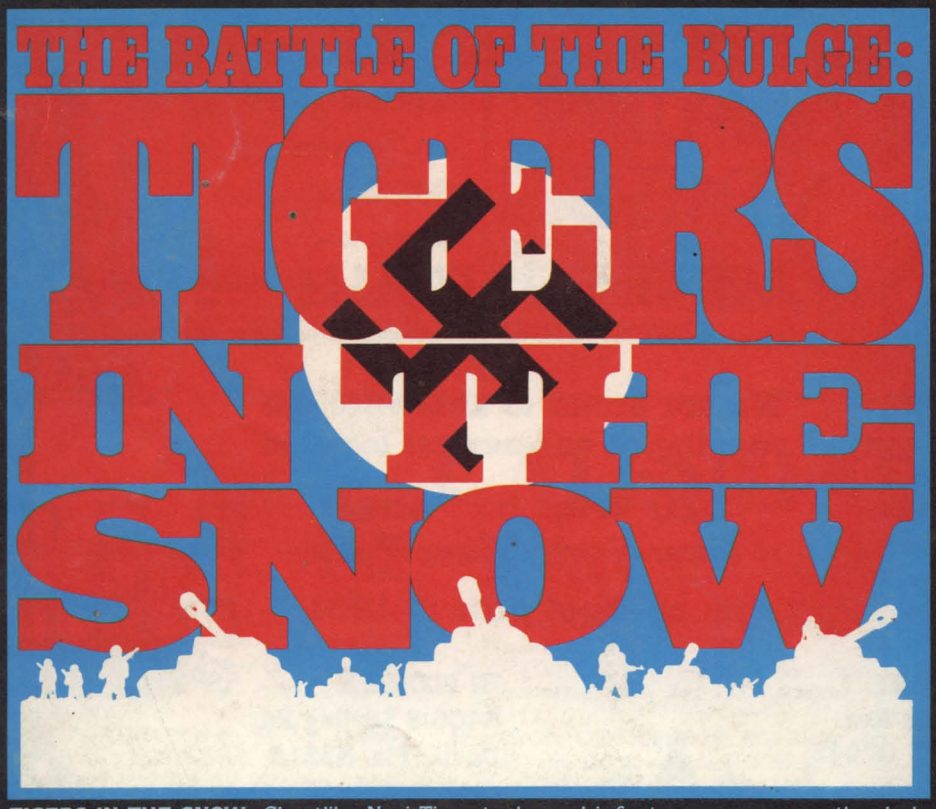

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